

*The Australian*

# WOMEN'S WEEKLY

December 26, 1956

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# COUNTRY CLUB

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## The Australian WOMEN'S WEEKLY

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DECEMBER 26, 1956

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### CHRISTMAS IN A DIVIDED WORLD

**T**HE prospect of everybody in the world enjoying a happy Christmas this year is as far distant as the end of the rainbow.

Thus it ever was, thus it ever will be. *This world is populated by men, not saints, and they are good and bad, weak and strong.*

Out of their faults and failures comes the strife that makes Christmas fall short of the ideal of peace and goodwill.

This year, as every year, there are trouble spots.

In Palestine, the birthplace of Jesus, armed sentries patrol broken frontiers.

In Hungary, thousands face a bleak, hungry Christmas, waiting in dread for a knock on the door that could mean transportation or death.

In Egypt, UNO troops camp uneasily on the ancient sands over which generations of soldiers have battled and bled.

And in England, the very heart and hearthstone of Christmas to British people, there is despair and dismay over the economic crisis, and shame and confusion over the Suez debacle.

Yet there IS cause for thankful joy. A month ago it looked as though many mothers might be saying goodbye to sons-turned-soldiers this Christmas.

Grateful for this salvation, Australians prepare for Christmas with a deeper awareness of its true significance.

Christmas is the anniversary of the birth of the Man who gave the world the Christmas ideal.

At His birthday season men and women make their finest effort of the year to achieve, in spite of their human imperfections, the ideals He set.

### Our cover:

● Two pretty girls decorate a Christmas tree. Strictly speaking, they appear more concerned with their own decorative effect than with any genuine work on the tree, but, since in themselves they're as charming as gift-wrapped packages, nobody will complain. The color shot came from overseas, so we don't know the names of the models.

### This week:

● We announce this week the first of the prizewinners in our weekly "Dog Talk" contest. You'll find them on page 34. By coincidence the opening story in this, our annual special fiction issue (see opposite page), centres on a dog who talks.

### Next week:

● "Seven Steps to Shapeliness" is the title of our four-page beauty feature. It sets out a summer programme that will help you improve your figure whether you are underweight, overweight, or normal. The exercises, all illustrated, centre on your daily shower or bath. The diet hints enable you to take advantage of summer fruit now in season.

● Some outstanding events of 1956 are presented in two pages of pictures. You may be surprised when you see them, as we were when we collected them. So much happens in any year that dramatic events fade quickly from the memory. When 1956 is assembled in pictures it adds up to quite a year.

● When our next issue is on sale the Davis Cup will be the focus of sporting interest. The Australian squad and other players competing are pictured in color on our cover and two inside pages.

● Next week's pattern page is devoted to clothes for children from four to 16 years of age. It includes school uniforms and blouses for girls, and a blazer and a ranger suit for a boy, as well as several other attractive designs.

### "AUSTRALIA" SERIES FOR 1957

## Animals, flowers, birds pictured in color

● Next week we begin a new weekly color feature showing the rich and varied wild life of the Australian bush and seashore.

**T**HIS series follows our "Beautiful Australia" and "Wonderful Australia" of the past two years.

In those we presented the scenery of the country and aspects of its life and work.

We had ample proof of their popularity with readers from the success of the books we published this year and last year.

From time to time in the past we have published pictures of Australian animals, birds, and flowers.

Readers have liked them and asked for more.

So each week we will publish a full-page picture or a group of pictures showing



DR. ALLEN KEAST

Australian animals, birds, reptiles, flowers, insects, and marine life.

Already we have in hand a fine collection of color transparencies from leading nature photographers of the Commonwealth.

Many of these photog-

raphers are amateurs who have made a lifetime hobby of nature study. The photography of animals and birds requires expert knowledge, camera skill, and endless patience.

Some of the pictures in our collection represent literally years of effort on the part of the contributors.

In choosing pictures for this series and obtaining information to accompany them we have the assistance of a distinguished naturalist, Dr. Allen Keast, who will act as our technical adviser.

Dr. Keast, who is Curator of Birds and Reptiles at the Australian Museum, Sydney, is a graduate of the University of Sydney and obtained his doctorate of philosophy in biology at Harvard University, U.S.A.



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LOOK SMARTER  
FEEL MORE COMFORTABLE

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THE AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S WEEKLY — December 26, 1956



When Sarah told Michael about the plans both he and Points looked reproachfully at her.

By **MARGERY ALLINGHAM**

# Word in Season

**M**ICHAEL sat in the blue armchair, a loose jacket over his shirt, and his dark hair still flecked with the tinsel needles from the crown Sarah had made him, while Points sat on the rug and sniffed half-heartedly at a wax berry from the mock holly. They were both worried and preoccupied.

In the bedroom across the hall, Sarah was singing something unsuitable. As far as Points could gather, it was a song about a dance-hall dame, but he was not very good at that sort of thing, being essentially proper and a country person by birth, anyway, as, of course, all red setters are.

However, he knew she was singing it to annoy, and she was certainly succeeding. Michael looked thoroughly wretched, and Points himself was torn between sympathy and his own great personal problem.

It was past eleven o'clock at night on Christmas Eve, and apart from Sarah's self-conscious little cadence, the Chicago apartment was amazingly quiet. Nearly everybody else in their building had retired already or gone off to be with relatives in the country.

They themselves would leave in the morning to visit

friends in Oak Park, and would have gone before if Michael had not quietly insisted on spending the first Christmas Eve of his married life in his own home and not with the wild party of semi-strangers with whom Sarah had elected to pass the actual festival.

Michael was seldom obstinate where Sarah was concerned, as Points had often noticed with some misgiving, but on this occasion he had been absolutely adamant. He had arrived home at six o'clock with his little box

## A new look for an old Christmas legend

of decorations, and a secret package of presents for Sarah's stocking in his overcoat pocket.

Sarah had not been in. She had been making a protest at the late start to the holiday in her own rather pretty way, which never descended into open sulkiness. She had arrived ten minutes after Michael, charmingly contrite and full of apologies for having forgotten to do anything about dinner, so that he had had to change and telephone Ronnay for a table. But he had stood his ground about the

decorations, and at a quarter to ten they had returned and he had proceeded to put them up despite her ridicule.

She had not offered to help, but had sat making a little crown of tinsel for him and another for Points, and had placed them on their heads as they sat surveying the little tree. After that she had sprung her great surprise. The Chet Thomas', she told them airily, were having a small midnight session to "take the corn out of carols," and she had promised, soul and honor, that she and Michael would both drop in to help them.

The news had shaken Michael. He had removed his crown with quiet dignity and, while not speaking the whole of his mind, had conveyed with a certain degree of force that wild horses would not drag him to that loathsome annex of tin-pan alley even on a night that was neither silent nor holy; on this one Sarah must realise that it was utterly out of the question.

Sarah had looked surprised in that odd way of hers, and had said, quite politely, that it was a pity, because she was certainly going, and that he was not to think of waiting

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# THE BOY WHO FOUND SANTA CLAUS

By  
**MARGARET  
COUSINS**

**I**T was the year of the war, and the raw material for the manufacture of department-store Santa Clauses was at its lowest ebb—a critical shortage. The old men already had jobs. They had come out of retirement, real and enforced, a Pickwickian crew, to take over the management of elevators, store counters, and accounting ledgers. They had become waiters, bus boys, and bellhops, painters, carpenters, and plumbers, sharpening up their old skills and beginning life over.

They had become doormen with rigid backs and white cotton gloves. They were practising law and medicine again. Advertisements in the papers read, wonder of wonders: "Nobody under forty-five need apply. Position permanent." It was the year of old men, but it left quite a hole in the department-store Santa Claus market.

This was certainly the only reason Mr. Sears ever fell heir to the red velvet breeches and ermine-trimmed tunic, the knee-high, shiny black boots, and the luxuriant, silver, real-hair wig and beard that belonged to the department store of Sampson and Cole. Though Mr. Sears was temperamentally not suited to the role of Santa Claus, he looked quite convincing in the part, owing to the fact that he had a nose like a cherry, and a round tummy which shook, whether he laughed or not, like a bowlful of jelly.

These physical characteristics derived from a lifetime devoted to a career of alcoholism and other vices too numerous to mention. The only drawback to the whole thing was his glacial-blue eyes, in which there was no semblance of a twinkle. But the haggard personnel manager of Sampson and Cole, faced with a Santa Claus-less sixth floor in December, saw fit to overlook this.

Mr. Sears had no taste for the job. His interest in any job was nil. Sampson and Cole's rather panic-stricken advertisement for a Santa Claus was forcibly pointed out to Mr. Sears by his parole officer and a social service worker in the Municipal Rehabilitation Shelter, where Mr. Sears was spending a customary three weeks allotted to him for reorientation by the State.

Mr. Sears' previous address had been the State Prison Farm, where he had sojourned five years, paying off a slight debt to society. It seemed that he had manoeuvred a widow out of her life savings.

This term, however, was only one of many. Mr. Sears' record was as long as a country road and just as bumpy. It extended over a period of roughly forty years and was rife with petty larceny, grand larceny, robbery, and confidence matters. At the age of ten Mr. Sears had swiped from a hardware store a pair of skates and had run foul of the Juvenile Court. At sixteen he had

made off with a new motor-cycle, while working as a delivery boy for a drugstore. He had wound up in the reformatory for eighteen months, from which he emerged with a lot of new ideas and a nickname that followed him for the rest of his life.

He was Stretch Sears from then on, and at twenty-one Stretch Sears was arrested for having stolen an automobile. He always had had a mechanical turn of mind. He had progressed easily to safe-cracking, which was quite popular in his youth.

Mr. Sears was not a particularly engaging personality. He was by now a rather dour old man with perennial dyspepsia from intermittent years of prison food and, in the intervals, long bouts with cheap whisky and the hunted, haunted life of the ex-convict. He had no great regard for people, except as grist for the mill of his peculiar talents. In short, he was not the happy, wistful tramp toward whom the careless heart of a passer-by is wont to yearn.

Still, the people who came in contact with Mr. Sears, in the soberer interludes of his career, continued to feel that there was something in him—that he was reclaimable—though the facts were against it. This probably was the reason he had been able to charm the widow out of her three thousand dollars. But even more perspicacious people, like Judge Chambers, the parole officer, and the case-hardened social worker, Miss Webster, clung to that quality in Mr. Sears which seemed to intimate that it is never too late to start over.

"Of course, it's only temporary," Judge Chambers said, discussing the Sampson and Cole job with his charge. "Just three or four weeks' work. But that'll get you on your feet. Give you an opportunity to look around."

Mr. Sears pondered that he probably could pick up a nice, light-fingered job in the Christmas crowd.

Mr. Sears felt his acid stomach turning, but he reasoned that it would be one way to get rid of the watchdogs of the Municipal Rehabilitation Shelter and back into circulation. It was almost too much to bear thinking about—cavorting around in false whiskers and a red monkey suit—but Mr. Sears was tired. Sometimes it seemed to him that an honest dollar might be fairly interesting for a change.

He was getting too old to run; most of his friends were behind bars or dead; and on occasion, such as now, he felt too exhausted to battle organised society, and thought there might be some point in putting himself in Judge Chambers' hands and turning into a respectable janitor. It was a terrible end, but he was getting so that he had to have his sleep.

"Well," he said, "might give it a whirl."

Mr. Shaw, the personnel manager, gave him one look, observed that he had the figure and the face for the job, was faintly chilled by the arctic-blue of his eyes, and told him to report to the alteration-room of the men's clothing department to have the red suit fitted.

Three hours later, Mr. Sears had been metamorphosed into Santa Claus.

In Santa Claus' office all the treasures of childhood were here collected around his enormous red leather armchair. But the "piece de resistance" of the collection was a magnificent aeroplane model of shining silvery aluminium, exquisite in detail, equipped with batteries of lights, red and blue, with landing gear that could be raised and lowered, tailpieces that could be angled, propellers that whirled with the most convincing sound, and an unbelievably complete instrument panel. He always had liked mechanical things. The aeroplane model was priced at \$9.50. It was suspended just outside Santa Claus' office, and it was the cynosure of all masculine eyes, fathers' and sons' alike.

It cannot be truthfully said that Mr. Sears was a charming Santa Claus. He was on the gruff side (although he honestly tried to live up to his character).

Indeed, several grown people had the inarticulate feeling that he was a strange and vaguely sinister kind of Santa Claus. But they reassured themselves by looking at his benign tummy and his cherry nose and did not quite get around to realising his eyes were odd.

The untidy kid held up his hand, which trembled slightly, and pointing to the aeroplane said firmly, "I want that."

The first day or two he was tense and nervous. He never had been around children in his life. They bored him, and he often had the impulse to kick some of the spoiled ones where it would do the most good, and the scared, timid ones nonplussed him. The extroverts and the curious who clambered on his knee and pulled at his beard unnerved him most of all.

At the end of the first day he was exhausted from all this unnatural self-discipline and made plans to slip; but Miss Webster was waiting at the employees' entrance when he emerged all set to hit for a saloon, and she conveyed him back to the Municipal Rehabilitation Shelter.

Mr. Sears, who had taken this job only to escape surveillance and make a get-away, soon discovered that he was to be accompanied morning and night to and from the door of Sampson and Cole. This frustration added to his mounting restlessness as the occupant of Santa Claus' office and made him brood on desperate matters.

With something approaching hatred he stared at the line of noisy children waiting, never too patiently, for his services. To this was added speculation when he looked at their hovering mothers, mostly wearing expensive fur coats and dangling fine alligator and calfskin handbags, which were no doubt crammed with fresh green currency. The clientele of Sampson and Cole was exclusive and rich.

The only thing that restrained him was the customary nightly searching at the exit by the store detective. It seemed to Mr. Sears that it just wouldn't be worth while. His inconvenient memories of prison deterred him; but this, too, made him sad. He felt that he was losing his grip.

After the first few days the tension eased a bit. Mr. Sears got together a speech, which he uttered by rote to each newcomer, and it seemed to satisfy. The children were more interested in what they wanted than they were in him, anyway. As he wrote down their unreasonable demands and handed each one the lollipop and the red balloon with "Sampson and Cole" on it in white letters, he disliked them all heartily.

They were, in truth and in many ways, creatures of another world, a world that Mr. Sears in his tenderest youth had never inhabited. They were the sheltered children of privilege, some polite and some not, some avaricious, greedy, and pugnacious, some quiet, pleasant, and kind, but all strangers in that deep sense of the word.

There could be between them and this weather-beaten old derelict no happy concourse of ideas or emotions. They could come to only superficial terms. But Mr. Sears minded his business and tried hard. "Come in, sister," he would bellow to a pigtailed mite. "Come into old Santy Claus' office."

The child would advance, timorously or boldly, depending on her nature, and sometimes drop him a curtsy or sometimes manage to kick his shins. Either might throw Mr. Sears off, but he bore up.

"Now, what would the little lady like Santa Claus to leave in her stocking?" he would inquire stickily, affecting a grimace or a grin and leaning close for the confession.

The little girl would swallow, take a deep breath, and reel off the names of ten or twelve presents.

"But what would you like best of all?" he would urge, and when the decision came he would write it down.

"Just hand this note to your mother," he would instruct, and pass out the lollipop and the red balloon. Sometimes he would forget and say "your maw" or "your old lady," but the children, who were all young, never seemed to notice.

He varied the formula for the boys.

"How-de-do, son!"

"Hello!" from the round-eyed child.

"Have you been a good boy?"

They all bobbed their heads in eager acquiescence, although Mr. Sears could tell from looking at them that it was a distinct overstatement. They had all probably been little hellions for at least three hundred days of the year.

"Now tell me, man to man, what you want me to put in your sock?"

They always had the answer to that. Three weeks of this pap would have been stultifying to somebody who had led a less racy existence than Mr. Sears. To him it was almost worse than prison. He fomented in his mind plans for escape, but by night he was too tired and by day he was too busy. As Christmas drew nearer the crowds increased, and the line in front of Santa Claus' office grew longer.

It was the day before Christmas Eve that he got the rude shock. Santa Claus had just called it a day and was ready to shut up shop. He stood up, groaning, and went to the stable door to close the upper half.

The Tenth Avenue Kid was standing there.

He was a small, pallid boy of indeterminate age. He could have been anywhere from eight to eleven. He had on a pair of dirty knickers and an old pull-over fraying at the edges. He was gloveless and overcoatless and grimy.

He was so completely out of place in the plush environment of Sampson and Cole that Mr. Sears could not imagine how he had got past all the floor-walkers and sales clerks and managed to look around. It was obvious to Mr. Sears' practised eye that he had been looking around rather thoroughly.

"Hello, son!" he boomed, getting into his routine, almost without thinking that this was no prospect for Sampson and Cole.

"Can it!" said the Tenth Avenue Kid. For a moment Mr. Sears felt quite happy, as if he had come home; but then he remembered himself. He looked at the unwholesome sprout before him and knew he didn't have to be bothered.

"I reckon you came over to give your instructions to Santy Claus," Mr. Sears said with heavy sarcasm. "Have you been a good boy this year?"

"Have you?" inquired the Tenth Avenue Kid.

Mr. Sears started in surprise, but he felt a warm tingle of appreciation. "That ain't no part of this here setup," he remarked, speaking naturally for the first time in three weeks.

"Don't give me that stuff," the Tenth Avenue Kid said, with the simple wisdom of the hard-bitten. "You ain't real."

"Whadda ya mean, I ain't real? You see me standing here, don't-cha?"

"You're just a man," the Kid said.

Mr. Sears wished, for once, that he could live up to this lofty denomination.

"You can fool babies and dopes," the Kid went on arrogantly (he was obviously not one of the wistful poor). "But I ain't no dope."

Mr. Sears regarded the skinny, taut little figure before him, with its short-cropped hair, the blazing blue eyes, and its proud, intrepid stance, and he felt a twinge of something like rheumatism in his left side. It had been a long time since Mr. Sears had been bothered with affection for any human being—not since Minney Richards, his old pal, got it in a stick-up.

He hardly recognised this emotion, which was more like a physical pain; but anyway, pity stirred in him or some memory of himself when he was small. He had been anti-social for a long time, and he didn't like children; but there was something about this Kid that got next to you.

He pondered this last pronouncement, and then he said, as winningly as he knew how, "Well, take it or leave it, I'm Santy Claus."

"Aw," sneered the Kid, "you stink on ice."

"Have it your own way," Mr. Sears said testily, hurt by his failure. "Move on, now. The lights are going out in five minutes. You wouldn't want to get locked up in here."

"I ain't afraid," the Kid stated. "I ain't afraid of you, either."

"You got no call to be afraid of Santy Claus," Mr. Sears said.

The Kid remained quiet and looked at him carefully. When he had finished this close scrutiny his face had changed a little. "All right," he said at last. "Prove it."

"Prove what?" Mr. Sears inquired. His feet

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Mr. Sears' heart sank as he gave a startled look at the glittering toy suspended above him. "Oh, so you like aeroplanes, eh?" he asked.



## AN INTRIGUING SHORT STORY

By  
**MARGERY  
SHARP**

**H**ENRY CHEVRON was driving home to London after a day in the country when he remembered that he had promised to bring his wife a dozen fresh eggs.

He was an architect, and the trip had been one of business, not pleasure—to advise on the conversion of a stately home into a country club—but his client had provided an excellent lunch, and this made Henry all the more anxious to procure Catherine her eggs.

For half the 10 years of their marriage they had been a very attached couple, and now that their attachment had worn away they clung all the more, in all their dealings with each other, to this sort of playing fair.

Henry slowed down to 20. In the next village a crudely lettered sign, "Fresh Produce," caught his eye, so he stopped outside the small brick cottage and sounded his horn. After a few moments a young woman emerged and looked at him impatiently.

"Eggs?" asked Henry.  
"Sorry, we haven't got none," snapped the young woman.

Henry asked if she knew where he might be luckier.

"Well, you could try Mrs. Cox. She's at the other end," the young woman said. "If you'll excuse me, we're watching the television."

She turned and immediately went in again. Henry leaned on his horn and shouted for further directions. Of what the young woman called over her shoulder he distinguished only one word. It sounded like "witch." From a patron of television this seemed unlikely; Henry shrugged and drove on, but slowly, in case Mrs. Cox, witch or no, had a sign out saying "Eggs."

At the end of the little street he found what he was looking for—not a sign, indeed, but a dwelling slightly larger than the rest, with the name "Wychwood Cot" fading on its gate. Henry grinned to himself, stopped again, and got out.

No one answered his ring, but he knew enough of country ways to go round to the back and try there. The garden behind was a mere strip of grass terminated by a tall, gaping hedge with apple trees showing above; more importantly, about this apology for a lawn strayed several hens. Henry knocked at the back door and waited.

Again no one answered. He stepped back a pace or two and looked up for a television aerial. It was there all right, and no doubt Mrs. Cox was there, too, inside, glued to her set. To step in and call out seemed the only plan; the knob turned easily under his hand, and Henry tentatively entered—at the same moment was himself transfixed by a screech from the rear. Up from the apple orchard an old, old woman came running, screeching her head off.

"What do you want? Who are you? What do you want in my house?" she screamed.

Henry waited until she was beside him, and then moderately explained his errand.

"I can't hear you, I'm deaf!" shouted the woman, and with a

"Is there any reason why I shouldn't leave you?" Henry said furiously to Catherine.

# UNNECESSARY ALIBI

strong old hand on his wrist held him firmly where he was. He wouldn't have been surprised if she'd blown a police whistle. "Who are you?" she repeated furiously. "What's your name?"

There was no reason why Henry should tell her, but he did. It seemed, at the moment, impossible not to. Of course she couldn't hear. She pulled him into the kitchen and indicated on the drainboard a paper bag and a pencil. "Go on, write who you are," she ordered, and Henry obediently wrote his name, adding the query, "Eggs?"

"Never heard of you!" the old woman shouted. "Don't sell eggs! Go away, go away, go away!"

Henry was only too glad to. Actually, a hundred yards farther on he came to a gate lettered "Wychwood Farm," and there bought a dozen fresh eggs without the least difficulty. It slightly disturbed him, he didn't know why, that he'd left his name with Mrs. Cox (who presumably wasn't Mrs. Cox at all). He didn't know why, but he wished he hadn't, and to forget the episode all the sooner he said nothing about it to his wife.

He got in about eight, and they dined together as usual in the restaurant attached to their apartment hotel. Their apartment included a kitchenette, and in the first years of their marriage they had often dined there—Catherine cooking while Henry looked on, then both of them doing the dishes to sugary music on the radio; but the habit had lapsed along with many others, and now Catherine used the kitchen only to cook herself a luncheon omelet. It was simpler just to eat in the restaurant; also, a little conversation with neighboring diners covered any silence between themselves.

"I shouldn't mind an early bedtime," Henry said as they finished dinner. "I'm rather tired."

Catherine didn't inquire into his day's events. If she had, he might have inquired into hers; as it was, he didn't notice the omission.

It was in the next day's evening paper that he saw the paragraph with his own name in it. If it hadn't been for the name, he mightn't have noticed the item at all. It was quite a short paragraph: The old woman of Wychwood Cot, even beaten and robbed, rated no more in the London Press. But one's eye notoriously picks out, from any page of print, one's own name; and beneath the headline, "Motorist May Aid Police," an obviously official release expressed Scotland Yard's desire to interview a Mr. Henry Chevron—in connection (Henry read on) with an attack the previous evening upon Mrs. Selina Louisa Parkin, seventy, of Wychwood Cot, Skrimbles, Oxfordshire.

Absurdly enough, Henry's first thought was that he'd been right about her not being Mrs. Cox. She wasn't; she was Mrs. Parkin.

Of course he put the frivolous point aside at once. He wasn't exactly worried, but he saw the need to clear things up as soon as possible. When he read the paragraph, he was already on his way home, by underground, from his office, and there seemed no point in getting off to telephone when he could do so ten minutes later from his own apartment.

His decision to contact the police was instant, and solid—their investigation of himself was obviously pure routine, necessary if tiresome, and the sooner dealt with the better. Henry Chevron was both a sensible man and a good citizen.

He returned to the paragraph with calm, and from it learned that Mrs. Parkin had been struck about the head with a blunt instrument, and was discovered, still unconscious, still clutching an empty handbag, next morning by the milkman. I'll telephone as soon as I get in, Henry said to himself.

As it turned out, he had no need to. The police were there before him.

"You've been quick," said Henry. It wasn't what he'd have said if he'd thought. But he hadn't had time to think. Letting himself in with his key, heading

straight for the telephone in the living-room, he hadn't thought even what he'd say to Catherine.

The policeman smiled modestly. "It's an unusual name, sir. Chevron is a very unusual name."

"I was just going to telephone you," said Henry. "I only read about it on my way home; I was just going to telephone you."

"Why do you both have to say everything twice over?" asked Catherine irritably. "Won't that make it all take twice as long?"

Henry glanced at her. She was irritated, possibly nervous, but some marital sixth sense told him she didn't yet know what it was all about.

"Hasn't he told you?" Henry asked in marital code.

"I've only just got here," interposed the policeman mildly.

"I've only just come in myself," said Catherine. "He was waiting outside. He just asked—"

"You haven't seen an evening paper?"

She shook her head.

"Then you'd better know," said Henry, "that an old woman I tried to buy eggs from last night has been hit over the head. Hence the investigation—initiated, as I remarked before, with commendable speed."

Surprisingly, it was the policeman who thrust a hand under Catherine's elbow. Henry, seeing her sway, simply felt all his wife's irritation transferred to himself. There was, after all, nothing to faint about.

"If I may say so, sir, a little sudden," rebuked the policeman, carefully assisting Catherine to the sofa. But it seemed he wasn't really cross with Henry either; again he smiled his modest smile. "As for speed, I only wish all our jobs were so easy. You left, as you might say, your card; and at Wychwood Farm, where you bought eggs—You did buy eggs there, sir?"

"Certainly," Henry agreed. "One dozen fresh."

"There they fancied you heading for London. So it was really very simple, you being the only Chevron in the Directory. And now, sir, if you care to tell me anything you know of Mrs. Parkin, describe your visit to her, and so on, it may help us to get the picture and we mayn't need to trouble you any further."

"The picture of what?" Henry asked. "Is it murder, or is she still alive?"

The moment after he spoke he knew, again, that it wasn't what he'd have said if he'd

"It was just a form of speech," apologised the policeman.

"I still don't like it," said Henry loudly. He became aware that Catherine was trying to catch his eye, that she wanted to interrupt, and he motioned her angrily to silence. He knew he was losing his temper and that it was foolish, but her interference wouldn't help him keep it.

With an effort he continued more blandly, "Let's say, officer, I agree I entered, as you put it, a house called Wychwood Cot, whose owner I didn't know from Adam, yesterday evening on my way back to town, with the idea of buying eggs. Will that do?"

"According to our information, sir, Mrs. Parkin didn't sell eggs."

Henry controlled himself.

"I mistook the directions given me by a young woman farther down the street. Obviously she directed me to Wychwood Farm; I went to Wychwood Cot. The back door being unlatched, I entered. Mrs. Parkin, whose identity I did not then know, appeared at the same moment from the orchard. In the course of an extremely tiresome and fruitless conversation, she being as deaf as a doorpost, I wrote my name on a paper bag. I then went away empty-handed, leaving the lady, I assure you, unbeaten. I suppose the time—"

"Henry!" cried Catherine.

"Will you, for heaven's sake, leave this to me!" shouted Henry. "The time, officer, was then probably six fifteen."

The policeman sighed.

"It's a pity, sir."

"What's a pity?" snapped Henry.

"Mrs. Chevron, sir, just told me, just before you came in, you were home last night by six."

There are moments when the presence of a third party does not in the least inhibit a matrimonial exchange. Henry swung round upon Catherine exactly as though they were alone.

"You said I was here? Will you for heaven's sake tell me why?"

Catherine straightened her back against the petit-point cushions of the sofa. "I thought perhaps you'd been speeding," she said.

"If I had, what an idiotic way to behave!"

"I'm sorry," said Catherine.

"You may well be," retorted Henry furiously. "You've planted me as a number-one suspect in a possible murder case." He swung back to the policeman almost with relief, man to man.

"My wife, officer—and here I'll certainly

to sell me eggs. I imagine she screamed pretty freely. If her neighbors were in the least alarmed, why didn't they come rushing round?"

"They report they were going to, sir. As you say, the lady did scream out a good deal, which is why they weren't quicker, as one might put it, off the mark. But in this case they say it was more than usual; they were going to come round—"

"But they didn't," Henry pointed out to him.

"No, sir, because it stopped," said the policeman. With that he thanked Mr. and Mrs. Chevron both; observed that he wouldn't ask for a statement just at the moment; added that Mr. Chevron probably wouldn't be changing his address, but that if he did Scotland Yard would appreciate notice; and courteously took his leave.

"Now," said Henry, turning to his wife, Catherine, "tell me why you lied."

She sat upright against the cushions, but the color that had come back to her cheeks slowly ebbed again. It should have been a moment of respite—the policeman, so courteously withdrawing, should have left them to tears and anxious consultation, perhaps, but to a momentary respite as well.

Catherine and Henry each suspected that they had passed simply from one crisis to another, also that the second might prove the more disastrous. But there was nothing for it now but to go on—or so it seemed to Henry Chevron.

"Now tell me why you lied," Henry repeated. "You didn't think I was speeding; I don't, and you know it. So why did you tell that lie?"

Catherine moistened her lips. They weren't pale, because she used a very good lipstick, but the bordering flesh was too white.

"He asked what time you got in."

"I gathered that. Why did you say six? Why did you say I was here at six o'clock?"

"Because I'd told Mrs. Whyte you were," said Catherine.

Henry Chevron stared. The answer simply confounded him. He had to think, he had to think for several moments, before he even identified Mrs. Whyte as the woman in the next apartment. No particular friend; co-operative, Catherine always said, about taking in groceries, but otherwise negligible.

"You told Mrs. Whyte," said Henry blankly, "that I was here last night at six? When I wasn't? For heaven's sake, why?"

Catherine moistened her lips again.

"Because she heard. I mean, she must have. You know how thin these walls are. A man's voice. When I met her in the hallway just afterward she was just coming out of her apartment, so I knew she'd been there all the time. I said you were home."

Henry walked over to the window. The movement had no purpose; it was like a prolonged jerk of the body. His mind, on the other hand, was working smoothly and efficiently; it quite surprised him to find how rapidly he grasped and explored every implication of those few brief sentences. So this was what their years of playing fair had come to, he thought; this was what his wife's playing fair had covered.

He could even correct himself: Catherine's deception couldn't be of long standing, not years old; her very foolishness, her flurry before the other woman in the corridor, proved her comparatively fresh to intrigue. Yet in sum, this was what those years had come to.

"So when he asked me," Catherine continued painfully, "the policeman, I said the same thing again. I hadn't time to think. And even if I had—nothing seemed to have happened last night!" cried Catherine. "You didn't seem upset about anything! How could I know?"

"Nothing of that matters," Henry said. She was silent.

In the street below the window a bus stopped and several passengers got out. Henry knew most of them by sight; they were the

**The lie had seemed quite an innocent one,  
but now it threatened to destroy  
everything they had once held dear.**

thought. Some words are dangerous in themselves. The word murder is so dangerous. But the policeman's regard continued mild.

"Certainly Mrs. Parkin is still alive, sir. Only she can't give any evidence just yet. Now, sir, if you're willing to help—"

For a moment Henry thought of demanding his lawyer, but such a course was obviously unnecessary, and irritation had made him behave foolishly enough already. He nodded co-operatively, and the policeman nodded pleasantly back.

"When you called on Mrs. Parkin, sir—"

"Wait," said Henry. "I didn't call on Mrs. Parkin at all. Not in the social sense. I didn't know her; I didn't even know her name until I saw it in this evening's paper. I went in—"

"You do admit entering, sir?"

"Naturally. I left my name on a paper bag, no doubt you've got it, it's my writing, any expert could prove it. But I don't like the word 'admit.' I'm not 'admitting' anything. I'm—relating."

go on record; I'd like you to take this down—my wife has behaved like an imbecile. All right, I see you think you're on to something. I'd no motive—I don't need an odd pound from an old woman's handbag—but I see that owing to my wife's idiocy you've got grounds for suspicion. Is there any other evidence against me?"

The policeman looked shocked.

"If I may say so, sir, you're going much too fast. We're simply collecting information."


"Then what else have you collected? Perhaps I can help you again," said Henry ironically.

"Well, there was a certain amount of shouting and screaming, sir," said the policeman delicately. "Heard by the next-door neighbors about the time you say you left. Mrs. Parkin, to be more precise, was screaming 'Go away!'"

Henry laughed—he hoped lightly.

"Certainly Mrs. Parkin was screaming 'Go away!' at me, because she didn't want

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It seemed a brilliant idea to hold a murder  
hunt, with Poirot himself to present the prizes  
... World-famous author writes our new serial

# DEAD MAN'S FOLLY

BY  
AGATHA  
CHRISTIE

**I**T was Miss Lemon, Poirot's efficient secretary, who took the telephone call. Laying aside her shorthand notebook, she raised the receiver and said without emphasis, "Trafalgar 8137."

Hercule Poirot leaned back in his upright chair and closed his eyes. His fingers beat a meditative soft tattoo on the edge of the table. In his hand he continued to compose the polished periods of the letter he had been dictating.

Placing her hand over the receiver, Miss Lemon asked in a low voice, "Will you accept a personal call from Nassecombe, Devon?"

Poirot frowned. The place meant nothing to him.

"The name of the caller?" he demanded cautiously.

Miss Lemon spoke into the mouthpiece.

"Air raid?" she asked doubtfully. "Oh, yes—what was the last name again?"

Once more she turned to Hercule Poirot.

"Mrs. Ariadne Oliver."

Hercule Poirot's eyebrows shot up. A memory rose in his mind: windswept grey hair . . . an eagle profile . . .

He rose and replaced Miss Lemon at the telephone.

"Hercule Poirot speaks," he announced grandiloquently.

"Is that Mr. Hercule Poirot speaking personally?" the suspicious voice of the telephone operator demanded.

Poirot assured her that that was the case.

"You're through to Mr. Poirot," said the voice.

Its thin reedy accents were replaced by a magnificent booming contralto which caused Poirot hastily to shift the receiver a couple of inches farther from his ear.

"M. Poirot, is that really you?" demanded Mrs. Oliver.

"Myself in person, Madame."

"This is Mrs. Oliver. I don't know if you'll remember me—"

"But of course I remember you, Madame. Who could forget you?"

"Well, people do sometimes," said Mrs. Oliver. "Quite often, in fact. I don't think that I've got a very distinctive personality. Or perhaps it's because I'm always doing different things to my hair. But all that's neither here nor there. I hope I'm not interrupting you when you're frightfully busy?"

"No, no, you do not derange me in the least."

"Good gracious—I'm sure I don't want to drive you out of your mind. The fact is, I need you."

"Need me?"

"Yes, at once. Can you take an aeroplane?"

"I do not take aeroplanes. They make me sick."

"They do me, too. Anyway, I don't suppose it would be any quicker than the train really, because I think the only airport near here is Exeter, which is miles away. So come by train. Twelve o'clock from Paddington to Nassecombe. You can do it nicely. You've got three-quarters of an hour if my watch is right—though it isn't usually."

"But why do you need me? What is all this about?"

"Nasse House, Nassecombe. A car or taxi will meet you at the station at Nassecombe."

"But why do you need me? What is all this about?" Poirot repeated frantically.

"Telephones are in such awkward places," said Mrs. Oliver. "This one's in the hall . . . People passing through and talking . . . I can't really hear. But I'm expecting you. Everybody will be so thrilled. Goodbye."

There was a sharp click as the receiver was replaced. The line hummed gently.

With a baffled air of bewilderment, Poirot put back the receiver and murmured something under his breath. Miss Lemon sat with her pencil poised, incurious. She repeated

in muted tones the final phrase of dictation before the interruption.

"—allow me to assure you, my dear sir, that the hypothesis you have advanced—"

Poirot waved aside the advancement of the hypothesis.

"That was Mrs. Oliver," he said. "Ariadne Oliver, the detective novelist. You may have read—"

But he stopped, remembering that Miss Lemon only read improving books and regarded such frivolities as fictional crime with contempt. "She wants me to go down to Devonshire today, at once, in—" he glanced at the clock—"thirty-five minutes."

Miss Lemon raised disapproving eyebrows.

"That will be running it rather fine," she said. "For what reason?"

"You may well ask! She did not tell me."

"How very peculiar. Why not?"


"Because," said Hercule Poirot thoughtfully, "she was afraid of being overheard. Yes, she made that quite clear."

"Well, really," said Miss Lemon, bristling in her employer's defence. "The things people expect! Fancy thinking that you'd go rushing off on some wild-goose chase like that! An important man like you! I have always noticed that these artists and writers are very unbalanced—no sense of proportion. Shall I telephone through a telegram, Regret unable to leave London?"

Her hand went out to the telephone. Poirot's voice arrested the gesture.

"Du tout!" he said. "On the contrary. Be so kind as to summon a taxi immediately." He raised his voice. "Georgie! A few necessities of toilet in my small valise. And quickly, very quickly, I have a train to catch."

The train, having done one hundred and eighty-odd miles  
THE AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S WEEKLY — December 26, 1956



*The fete was in full swing, but with Mrs. Folliat playing hostess while Lady Stubbs moved about alone, dressed in the height of fashion.*

of its two hundred and twelve miles journey at top speed, puffed gently and apologetically through the last thirty and drew into Nassecombe station. Only one person alighted, Hercule Poirot.

He negotiated with care a yawning gap between the step of the train and the platform and looked round him. At the far end of the train a porter was busy inside a luggage compartment.

Poirot picked up his valise and walked back along the platform to the exit. He gave up his ticket and walked out through the booking office.

A large saloon car was drawn up outside and a chauffeur in uniform came forward.

"Mr. Hercule Poirot?" he inquired respectfully.

He took Poirot's case from him and opened the door of the car. They drove away from the station over the railway bridge and turned down a country lane which wound between high hedges on either side.

Presently the ground fell away on the right and disclosed a very beautiful river view with hills of a misty-blue in the distance. The chauffeur drew into the hedge and stopped.

"The River Helm, sir," he said. "With Dartmoor in the distance."

It was clear that admiration was necessary. Poirot made the necessary noises, murmuring "Magnifique!" several times. Actually, nature appealed to him very little. A well-cultivated, neatly arranged kitchen garden was far more likely to bring a murmur of admiration to Poirot's lips.

Two girls passed the car, toiling slowly up the hill. They were carrying heavy rucksacks on their backs and wore shorts, with bright colored scarves tied over their heads.

"There is a Youth Hostel next door to us, sir," explained the chauffeur, who had clearly constituted himself Poirot's guide to Devon. "Hoodown Park. Mr. Fletcher's place it used to be. This Youth Hostel Association bought it and it's fairly crammed in summer-time. Take in over a hundred a night, they do. They're not allowed to stay longer than a couple of nights—then they've got to move on. Both sexes and mostly foreigners."

Poirot nodded absently. He was reflecting, not for the first time, that, seen from the back, shorts were becoming

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They were the gayest trio that ever took a summer holiday, but that's because they were faithfully following their book of rules which said "strictly no romance."

# THEN WE WERE THREE

By IRWIN SHAW, author of "The Young Lions."

MUNNIE BROOKS opened his eyes and looked at the ceiling. By the quality of the light, even through the drawn curtains, he could tell it was sunny outside. He turned his head. In the other bed Bert was still asleep. He slept quietly, the blankets neat. Munnie got out of his bed, and, barefooted, in his pyjamas, went over to the window and parted the curtains.

The last mists of morning were curling up from the fields, and, far off and below, the sea was smooth in the October sunlight. In the distance, along the curve of the coast, the Pyrenees banked back in green ridges towards a soft sky.

Munnie opened the curtains wider and looked at his watch. It was after ten o'clock. They had been up late the night before, all three of them, at the Casino in Biarritz. Earlier in the summer, when they had been on the Cote d'Azur, a paratroop lieutenant on leave had shown them a foolproof system for beating the roulette table, and, whenever they could, they frequented casinos.

They had never made more than 8000 francs in one night among them on it, but they had not lost yet, either. It had made their trip unexpectedly luxurious, especially when they got to places where there was a casino.

The night before they had won only 4500 francs, and it had taken them until two o'clock, but still, waking late, with the sea blue and weather clear, the franc notes on the chest of drawers added a filip of luck and complacency to the morning.

Standing there, feeling the sun warm on his bare feet and hearing the distant calm mutter of the surf, remembering the gambling and everything else about the summer that had just passed, Munnie knew he didn't want to start for home that morning as they had planned. Staring out across the brown field on the edge of the sea, Munnie knew that when he was older he would look back upon the summer and think: Ah, it was wonderful when I was young!

This double ability to enjoy a moment with the immediacy of youth and the reflective melancholy of age had made Bert say to him, half-seriously, half as a joke, "I envy you, Munnie. You have a rare gift—the gift of instantaneous nostalgia. You get twice your investment out of everything."

The gift had its drawbacks. It made moving away from places he liked difficult for Munnie, because the old man who travelled within him was always saying in his autumnal whisper: "It will never be like that again."

But putting an end to this long summer, which had stretched into October, was going to be more painful than any other finish or departure that Munnie had known. The trip to Europe had been a gift from his parents upon his graduation from college, and now, when he returned home, they would all be on the dock, the kind, welcoming, demanding faces, expecting him to get to work, asking him what he intended to do, offering him jobs and advice, settling him lovingly and implacably into the rut of being a responsible and tethered adult. From now on all holidays would be provisional, hurried interludes of gulped summertime between work and work. "The last days of your youth," said the old man within. "The boat docks in seven days."

Munnie turned and looked at his sleeping friend. This will change, too, Munnie thought. After the boat docks you will never be as close again. Never as close as on the rocks over the sea in Sicily, or climbing through the sunny ruins at Paestum. Never as close as on the rainy afternoon in Florence, when they had talked for the first time to Martha. Never as close as on the long, winding journey—the three of them packed into the small open car—up the Liguarian coast towards the border, stopping whenever they felt like it to swim at the little beach pavilions, with all the small, brightly colored pennants whipping out in the hot Mediterranean afternoon.

Never as close as on the road through the straw-colored, hot, bare Spanish countryside up to France. Never so close again, finally, as here, in this small, whitewashed, Basque hotel room, with Bert still asleep, and upstairs Martha, sleeping as she always did, curled up like a child, until they came in, as they always did, together—as if they did not trust themselves or each other to do it alone—to wake her.

Munnie threw the curtains wide, and let the sun stream in. If there's one boat I have a right to miss in my life,

he thought, it's the one that's sailing from Le Havre the day after tomorrow.

Munnie went over to Bert's bed, stepping carefully over the clothes crumpled on the floor. He poked Bert's bare shoulder with his fingers. "Master," he said. "Rise and shine." The rule was that whoever lost in tennis had to call the other "Master" for 24 hours. Bert had won the day before, 6-3, 2-6, 7-5. "It's after ten," Munnie poked him again.

Bert opened both eyes and stared at the ceiling. "But it's raining outside."

"It's a bright, hot, sunny morning," Munnie said. "Everybody always told me it rained all the time on the Basque coast," said Bert, lying still, complaining. "Everybody is a liar," Munnie said. "Get out of bed and listen to me."

Bert swung his legs slowly over the side of the bed and sat there, thin and bony, bare from the waist up, in his pyjama trousers that were too short for him, and from which his big feet dangled loosely. Munnie lit a cigarette and handed it to him. "I had an idea," Munnie said, "while you were wasting the precious hours of your childhood sleeping."

"Put it in the suggestion box," Bert yawned and closed his eyes.

"Listen," Munnie said eagerly. "I think we ought to miss the boat."

Bert smoked in silence for a moment, narrowing his eyes. "Some people," he said, "are born boat-missers, train-missers, and plane-missers. My mother, for example. She once saved herself from getting killed by ordering a second dessert at lunch. The plane left just as she got to the airport, and it came down in flames 35 minutes later. Not a single survivor. It was ice-cream and crushed fresh strawberries—"

"Come on, Bert." Sometimes Munnie got very impatient with Bert's habit of going off on tangents. "I know all about your mother."

"In the springtime," Bert said, "she goes mad for strawberries. Tell me, Munnie, have you ever missed anything in your life?"

"No," Munnie said.

"Do you think it's wise," Bert asked, "at this late stage, to fiddle with the pattern of a lifetime?"

Munnie went into the bathroom and filled a glass with water. When he came back into the bedroom Bert was lying on the bed again, smoking. Munnie stood over him, then slowly tipped the glass over Bert's bare brown chest. The water splashed a little and ran in thin trickles over Bert's ribs on to the sheets.

"Ah," Bert said, still smoking. "Refreshing."

They both laughed and Bert sat up. "All right, Fat Man. I didn't know you were serious."

"My idea," said Munnie, "is to stay here until the weather changes. It's too sunny to go home."

"What'll we do about the tickets?"

"We'll send a telegram to the boat people and tell them we'll take a passage later. They've got a waiting list a mile long. They'll be delighted."

Bert nodded judiciously. "What about Martha?" he asked. "Maybe she has to get to Paris today."

"Martha doesn't have to get to any place. Any time," Munnie said. "You know that."

Bert nodded again. "The luckiest girl in the world."

He stood up, looking in his flapping pyjama trousers like a boy who would be a good prospect for a college crew, if he could be induced to eat heavily for a year. He had been a chubby boy until he went into the Army, but by the time he came out in May he was long and stringy, and his ribs showed. When she wanted to make fun of him, Martha told him he looked like an English poet in his bathing suit. He went to the window and looked out over the mountains and the sea and the sunlight.

"You're right. Only an idiot would dream of starting home on a day like this. Let's go and tell Martha the party's still on."

They dressed quickly, in espadrilles and cotton trousers and tennis shirts, and went upstairs together and into Martha's room without knocking. She was still asleep, curled around herself, only her shoulders and the top of her head showing above the blanket, the hair dark and tangled and short. The pillow was on the floor.

Munnie and Bert stood in silence for a moment, looking down at the curled-up, blanketed figure and the dark head, each of them convinced that the other did not know what he was thinking.

"Awake," Bert said softly. "Awake to glory." He went over to the bed and touched the top of Martha's head. Watching him, Munnie could feel the tips of his own fingers twitching electrically.

"Please," Martha said, her eyes still closed. "It's the middle of the night."

"It's nearly noon," Munnie lied, "and we have to tell you something."

"Tell it to me," said Martha, "and get out of here."

"The Fat Man here," said Bert, standing at her head, "has come up with an idea. He wants us to stay here until it begins to rain. How do you feel about it?"

"Of course," Martha said.

Bert and Munnie smiled at each other, because they felt they understood her so well. "Martha," said Bert, "you're the only perfect girl alive."

Then they went out of the room to give her a chance to get dressed.

They had met Martha in Florence. They seemed to keep bumping into her in museums and churches, but she was alone and obviously American, and, as Bert said, they didn't come prettier, so finally they started to talk to each other.

Perhaps it was because they had first seen her in the Uffizi Gallery among the Botticellis that gave Munnie the idea, but he thought privately that, apart from the fact that her hair was short and dark, and irregularly cut, she looked like the Primavera—tall, slender, and girlish, with a narrow nose and deep, brooding, dangerous eyes.

He felt extravagant and embarrassed to be thinking things like this about a 21-year-old American girl who wore slacks, and had gone for a year to college. But he could not help himself. He never told Martha about it, and, of course, he never said a word on the subject to Bert.

Martha had been in Europe for nearly two years, and she was wonderful at telling you what places to go to, and what places were traps, and she spoke Italian and French, and she didn't scream for pity when she had to walk a few hundred yards on her own two feet, and she laughed at Bert's and Munnie's jokes, and made some of her own, and didn't giggle, weep, or sulk, which put her several notches above every other girl Munnie had ever known.

After they had been together for three days in Florence, and were due to start for France, it seemed unbearable just to leave her behind. As far as Munnie and Bert could tell, she had no plans of her own. "I tell my mother," Martha explained, "that I'm taking courses at the Sorbonne, and it's almost true—at least in the winter-time."

Martha's mother, who had been divorced three times, lived in Philadelphia, and now and then Martha sent her a photograph of herself, she said, so that when she finally returned home there wouldn't be an embarrassing moment on the dock when her mother wouldn't recognise her.

So Munnie and Bert talked it over very seriously, and then put it up to her.

"What we've decided," Bert said, "is that our Unguided Tour of Europe could use you as interpreter, hotel-finder, and chief taster of foreign foods. Apart from supplying a welcome feminine touch. Are you interested?"

"Yes," Martha smiled. "I'm on a schedule of drift. Didn't you know?"

"Does that mean," Munnie asked, because he liked to have everything absolutely clear, "that you want to come along?"



Martha fitted comfortably into the little two-seater between Munnie and Bert and she proved to be the most perfect companion.

"It means that I want to come along very much," said Martha. "I was hoping you'd ask me." She looked at each of them for exactly the same number of seconds, cheerful, grateful, ready for anything.

"Now," said Bert, "Munnie and I have talked it over. Something like this has to be planned in advance or there comes a dark and hideous night of disaster. We've thought up a good, workable set of rules, and, if you agree, off we go tomorrow. If not, no harm done, and we hope you spend a pleasant summer."

"Tell her, Bert," Munnie said impatiently.

"Rule Number One," Bert said, "no entanglements. Munnie and I are old friends, and we've planned this summer for years, and we've been having a wonderful time, and we don't want to wind up fighting duels or anything like that. Now, I know women—" He paused, daring either of them to smile.

"What do you know about women?" Martha asked, being serious.

"What I know is that women are always busy choosing," Bert went on. "I'll even tell you how you'd choose," he

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THANKS TO THE UNEXPECTED KINDNESS OF THE PEPPERY OLD COLONEL, THEY NOW HAD ...

# A HOME OF THEIR OWN

A heart-warming family short story

By CHARLES TERROT

**C**OLONEL HALLERFIELD made a last, supreme effort to concentrate, but the noise from below was too much for him. He took off his reading-glasses, snapped his book shut and stared irascibly at his wife.

"Those youngsters downstairs are making more noise over their packing than an artillery regiment striking camp," he said tetchily.

"Never mind, Arthur, they'll be gone tomorrow." A placating smile touched Bridget Hallerfield's plain, gentle face.

The colonel's muttered reply was lost to her as another rumble and protesting screech from the basement flat penetrated their floorboards.

"What did you say, dear?" Bridget asked.

"It doesn't matter." The colonel gave a suffering sigh. "I think I'll go along to the club."

"All right, dear. But one thing before you go."

"Well?" Her husband rose and tried to sound impatient.

"I've been thinking we should offer some sort of help to the Morvens. Moving house is such a difficult business. I'm sure they would appreciate anything we could do for them."

"Such as what? D'you think I should roll up my shirt sleeves, go down there and add to that confounded row?"

"No, dear," Bridget said. She put down her knitting. "I'm sure Mr. Morven wouldn't expect you to do that. But we might offer them breakfast tomorrow. It would be a help to Mrs. Morven, as they'll probably want to get off early."

"Breakfast?" the colonel echoed. "But dammit, Bridget, we hardly know the people. We've done little more than pass the time of day with them since they've been here."

"All the more reason to make up for our unneighborliness now."

The colonel paused in the act of shrugging on his coat. "Unneighborliness? How d'you mean? We've always done the civil thing by them. Had them up here for dinner once, didn't we?"

"We did, Arthur. Once."

"And, as I recall, the girl never stopped talking and young Morven hardly opened his mouth the whole evening."

His wife rose to help him as he fumblingly tried to adjust his scarf. She said: "Hasn't it occurred to you, Arthur, that they might have been a bit shy? You don't mean to, dear, but you know you can give the most terrifying impression of a martinet to people who don't know you."

"Bless my soul! Did they think I was going to eat 'em?"

"Probably," Bridget laughed gently. "The truth is, we've kept ourselves to ourselves rather too much, and, naturally, youngsters like the Morvens would hardly like to presume. We're a stand-offish nation, Arthur. Continentals and Americans are always saying so, and they're right. So much ice round us and we never try to break it."

The colonel frowned. All this stuff about ice and foreigners ... what had that got to do with giving the Morvens breakfast? Bridget had such a tiresome habit of wandering off the point. But he could see she was in earnest and he wanted to please her.

"All right, dear," he said. "Ask 'em if you want to."

She saw him out of their shabby Kensington flat, in which they had lived since his retirement. Then, soon after he had gone, she went down to the basement flat.

The front door was opened to her by Mark Morven, an impudent but attractive little boy with ginger hair and freckled face. His games of "cowboys and Indians" in the back garden had sometimes met with disapproving grunts from the colonel, but Bridget Hallerfield had always thought him an attractive child.

"Hallo," he said cautiously. "Have you come to complain? Mummy's always saying you will when I make a lot of noise."

"Oh no, Mark!" she answered quickly. It was sad to think that his parents were so wary of their nearest neighbors. "But I'd like a word with your mother, if I may."

"Okay. I'll give her a call—she's cooking supper now. Daddy's having his last bath and has gone to sleep in it."

Mark called to his mother, then turned back to the unexpected visitor. "We're going to a real home of our own tomorrow," he said proudly.

Bridget smiled at him. "I know—I expect you're very excited."

"You bet. Daddy's bought a cat—it cost fifty pounds—and it's going to be fearfully dangerous getting there."

As he spoke, his mother came to the door nervously fingering her apron. Bridget had always thought of Anne Morven as a demure, pretty young woman, but now the harassed expression on the girl's face made her hasten to explain the reason for her call.

At once Anne's expression relaxed. "How very kind of you, Mrs. Hallerfield," she said. "But are you sure we won't be a frightful nuisance?"

"Not at all," Bridget said. "Now what time would you like the meal?"

"Would half-past seven be too early?"

Bridget managed to conceal her dismay. "No—no, any time."

"Oh, that would be simply wonderful. Now we'll be able to pack all the kitchen stuff this evening."

Anne's very real gratitude was quite apparent. And Bridget found herself warming to the girl. Suddenly she felt she wanted to say something more, but did not quite know how to put it.

"I'd like to wish you all the luck in the world," she began hesitantly. "It's—it's a very big experience—moving to the first home you can really call your own. I can imagine how you feel."

Anne's tired face broke into a smile. "Why, thank you, Mrs. Hallerfield," she exclaimed in a rather surprised tone.

A moment later she closed the door and went back into the dismal vault where she, her husband, and Mark had lived for four years. The daylight filtering through a small window was supplemented by a naked electric-light bulb which shone down on packing-cases, stacked chairs, and rolled curtains. She thought: How I hate this dump—but heavens, weren't we lucky to snap it up when we did. At least, Pete has never had to live with in-laws.

It was when her husband had finished his National Service that they had taken the flat, and at first the feeling of total independence had blinded them to its drawbacks. Then Mark was very ill with pneumonia and they decided they must start saving to buy a home in the country.

It had meant cutting out simple pleasures like cinemas and dances, giving up cigarettes, doing without holidays and seeking in every way to economise on housekeeping. Anne had taken an uncongenial part-time job as secretary to the head-mistress of a kindergarten school, and Peter had swotted up at nights to pass his final engineering exams.

Now they had achieved their goal. Peter had landed a good job with an engineering firm in Oxford, and they had bought a country cottage not far away.

Peter, in pyjamas, came through from the bathroom, rubbing his head with a towel. He was a large-scale edition of his son—ginger-haired, attractive, sometimes exasperating—but with an easy-going sense of humor.

She told him about the Hallerfields' invitation. He was as surprised as she had been.

"Mrs. H. always looks such a disdainful old aristocrat to me," he said. "And the colonel's such a ferocious fire-eater. Still, maybe we got them wrong."

Next morning Bridget Hallerfield rose at six, to give herself plenty of time to prepare the Morvens' breakfast, for her cooking was sketchy. About half an hour later, the colonel, sleepy and bad-tempered, wandered through to the kitchen and found her looking very distressed.

"What the devil's wrong, Bridget?" he demanded.

"Look." She pointed to the stove, covered in the sticky white lava of porridge which had boiled over. "And that's not all," Bridget said unhappily. "While I was laying the

dining-room table, that horrible great cat—the one with stripes like a tiger—got in here somehow and was out like a flash with my fishcake mixture."

"Blast the cat," the colonel snapped.

"The trouble is, I don't know what else to give the Morvens. We're completely out of eggs."

He patted her shoulder. "Never mind, old girl. We'll think of something."

From that moment he rose splendidly to the occasion. After making Bridget a cup of tea, he suggested opening a tin of beautiful peach-fed ham, sent them by friends in South Africa, which they had been keeping as a special treat.

The breakfast party was a strained affair at first. The Morvens seemed shy and embarrassed. Bridget worked hard at being the charming hostess, but the colonel rather spoiled things by interrogating the young couple in a fierce, barking voice, to conceal his self-consciousness.

"What's it like, this place you're going to?"

"It's called Pear Tree Cottage," Anne volunteered. "It's a little dream house, but an awful lot wants doing to it."

"In bad condition, eh?"

"No-no. It needs painting inside and out, but we think we can do most of the work ourselves. It's well built."

The conversation lapsed. Bridget stepped smoothly into the breach as she poured out the coffee. She said: "Did you have much difficulty in finding a house, Mr. Morven?"

"We were almost defeated," Peter answered wryly. "The sort of cottage we had in mind seemed right beyond our means. Then an agent sent us particulars of Pear Tree Cottage, which was going cheap for a quick sale. It was a case of love at first sight, and it did seem a bargain."

"I'm so glad for you both," Bridget said. "I'm sure you are going to be very happy. And if you want any help, things sent down from town or anything like that—"

"Mm. Yes. You youngsters must feel you can count on us," the colonel said. "Hang it all, we've been neighbors long enough. Trouble is, we're such a stand-offish nation. We're all the same—never break the ice. The Continentals and Americans are always telling us that, but we won't learn. I was saying as much to Bridget only yesterday."

His wife's surprised glance matched those of his guests, but the colonel seemed impervious to this. He was scowling at the window in which the gigantic striped cat had suddenly appeared.

"Great heavens," he exclaimed. "That brute again!"

"That's Satan, wanting some breakfast," exclaimed Mark.

"He's already had some," said Anne. "At least, he came in about an hour ago with some evil-smelling fishy stuff all over his whiskers. I suppose he'd been rummaging in someone's dustbin again." She gave Bridget an apologetic smile. "Satan's our cat—I expect you've seen him around."

"Yes—once or twice," Bridget replied faintly.

Peter said: "I think you must be about the only people in the neighborhood who haven't complained about him. I do hope he's never pinched anything of yours?"

Bridget glanced anxiously at her husband. "No—no, I don't think so."

"Can he have some breakfast, too?" asked Mark.

Anne told him to be quiet, then said to Bridget: "Satan's really a frightful cat. I don't know why we're so fond of him. We went down to the docks one Sunday to look at the ships, and Peter bought him off a Lascar seaman for sixpence."

The colonel pushed back his chair. "Yes, he's a magnificent beast. Always was rather partial to cats. I'd better offer him a drink."

A moment later the cat jumped into the room. With a stern expression the colonel placed a saucer of milk in front of it and stroked it gravely. Satan purred loudly.

The ice was breaking. Conversation thereafter flowed more easily. The Morvens had at last become aware that the

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Watched by his wife and the Morven family, the colonel poured some milk for Satan, who purred loudly.

colonel's manner and the colonel himself were two very different things. Before they took their leave they felt very much at ease and Peter made a charming and spontaneous little gesture by asking the Hallerfields to visit the cottage some time. This seemed to please the old couple.

Just as they were about to leave, he hurried back into the dining-room and returned with the remains of the ham, which he insisted they take with them to supplement their picnic lunch. And after their ancient, grossly overloaded car had disappeared from sight round the corner, he turned to Bridget and said: "You know, those youngsters are brave."

It was while they were doing the washing-up that the telegraph-boy arrived. He came upstairs and asked the Hallerfields if they knew where the Morvens could be found.

Bridget had their address, having offered to forward their letters, but while she was getting it the colonel persuaded the boy to let him have a look at the telegram in case it concerned some immediate matter over which he could help.

"What does it say?" asked Bridget.

The colonel looked upset. He said: "This is from the house agents. They're in trouble over that cottage already. Bad trouble."

Pear Tree Cottage was a half-timbered building with a fairly large garden. The interior of the cottage was full of blackened oak and cracked lattice windows; there was a twisting staircase and a really beautiful inglenook fireplace in the long, low sitting-room. The place had considerable charm.

The Morvens arrived shortly before six, their car towed by the removal van. The journey had been punctuated by minor catastrophes: Satan had escaped during the halt for lunch and it had been an awful business catching him again.

They were met at the front gate by Mr. Langridge, the house agent through whom they had bought the cottage.

"I'm afraid I have some rather disturbing news for you, Mr. Morven," he began. "I sent you a wire yesterday evening, but I've subsequently found out it didn't arrive until after you'd left this morning." He paused. "I'm sorry to say you've been served with a 'Notice to Treat.'"

"Well, now, that's a fine thing," Peter said. "Who am I supposed to treat?"

Mr. Langridge looked gloomy. He said: "I thought you'd be familiar with the term. In your case it simply means that the government want Pear Tree Cottage, and so your property is going to be taken away from you almost at once."

There was a stifled "No!" from Anne.

Mr. Langridge continued: "There's an army experimental station near here, and they're taking another three hundred acres, which includes your land. The notice came through late yesterday afternoon, and as soon as I heard about it I—"

Peter cut him short. "Where is the notice?"

"I expect it's in your letter-box."

Sure enough it was. As Peter read it, he exclaimed with mingled sarcasm and anger: "How cosy! We arrive at our new home and the first letter we get is one telling us we can't live here."

"Of course, you have ten days in which to appeal," said Mr. Langridge, "and you will eventually be paid something for the cottage. The government don't expect you to give it away."

"That's decent of them," Peter commented dryly.

"How much will we be paid?" asked Anne.

"Ah, that's difficult to say."

## Continuing . . . A Home of Their Own

[from page 13]

"Please try to give us some idea."

"The position is this. In a case of compulsory purchase, the government inspectors assess the value of the property. Now, in my experience, they do this very fairly, but they judge it solely and simply as a 'housing unit.'"

"Meaning what, exactly?"

"Meaning, Mr. Morven, that such nebulous attributes as 'charm,' 'beautiful setting' count for nothing. You must face the fact that quite a bit of Pear Tree Cottage's value lies in its charm."

"How much?" Anne repeated.

Mr. Langridge hesitated. "About a quarter of what you have paid for it. Perhaps a little more. But not much more."

That, it seemed, was the situation. It completely staggered the Morvens.

"What are we going to do?" Anne asked as she and Peter went upstairs to bed.

"I suppose we'll fight," Peter answered.

"But we've fought for years. We've done without things, we've scraped and saved and worked ourselves nearly to death to buy this cottage. Fighting's no good, Pete. Look what's happened. The trouble is, there's no room for small people like us in the world today."

As they entered the bedroom she began to cry . . .

The tragedy which had befallen the Morvens seemed so incomprehensible to the Hallerfields that at first they thought the telegram must be some sort of cruel practical joke. Then the colonel telephoned the agents and had learned the full facts. After ringing off he was so angry that he felt quite ill and Bridget had to fetch him a brandy.

"Is there anyone who could help the Morvens?" she asked when he had recovered a little. "Anyone at your club with a bit of influence, Arthur?"

"I've been trying to think. If only one wasn't so out of the swim these days."

"What about Drippy Nuneaton?" she suggested. "I've heard you say he's in the club most evenings and he is an M.P."

The colonel laughed shortly. "Drippy lost his seat in the last election."

"All the same, dear," Bridget persisted, "I think you ought to go along to the club this evening. You might meet someone who could help."

But the club was rather empty that evening. Drippy was there, as usual, and the colonel thought he might as well buy him a drink.

Drippy, a tall, willowy old man with rather prominent features, had been a friend of his since they had been cadets together at the Royal Military College.

While they were sipping their pink gins the colonel broached the subject which was uppermost in his mind.

"Look here, Drip," he said, "are you by any chance on friendly terms with the nabobs in the present Government?"

"All good friends of mine!" Drippy replied.

"Then you may be of some use. I want to get in touch with someone who'll kick up a row over a damn scandal. You know the sort of thing. Question in the House, chits to the P.M., and all that."

"What's the trouble?"

"Some people I know have just bought a cottage in the country, and it's been pinched by the army—to be precise, an outfit calling itself the Directorate of Pyrotechnical Research."

Drippy grimaced. "Bad luck on your friends," he said.

"Though, of course, arbitrary

requisitioning and compulsory purchase are completely justified at the present time by the needs of the nation as a whole."

"Oh, don't be so damned pompous, old boy," the colonel retorted. "I might have known it was a waste of time asking your advice."

"Perhaps it isn't," Drippy lit a cigarette and inhaled deeply. "Pyrotechnical Research, you say? Do you remember a fellow called 'Ferret' Ovington in the regiment? He must have been a subaltern when you were C.O."

"Of course I do. Joined us in Bangalore. Little red-haired chap. Rotten bad horseman—always falling off."

"I had a drink with him a month or so ago," said Drippy. "Well?"

"He happens to be a brass-hat at the War House now—Director-General of Pyrotechnical Research."

"Is he, by Jove?" The colonel banged down his glass. "Thanks, Drip! Never known you to be so helpful. I think



I'll go and have a word with 'Ferret' Ovington tomorrow." He hurried home to tell Bridget the good news, and while they were having supper, he enumerated all the things he was going to say to his ex-subaltern who was now a major-general.

But at first Bridget did not seem as enthusiastic as he had hoped she would be. "Arthur," she said, "what I'm going to say now may hurt your feelings, but you've got to listen for the sake of the Morvens."

"Eh?" he exclaimed. "'Ferret' Ovington will remember you as his C.O. in a crack cavalry regiment when you were bandbox smart, and tomorrow it may be rather a shock to him if he sees you—well, looking different."

She broke off, wondering how she could voice her thoughts without hurting her husband too much. It needed a special sort of courage to continue: "I'm worried about your appearance. He'll think to himself: 'This shabby old man is right out of the swim now—he's just another retired colonel without any influence with anyone, and I needn't pay attention to anything he says.' Do you see what I mean, Arthur?"

The colonel was silent for some moments, then he raised his head and said gruffly: "I suppose I do look a pretty average tramp these days, but there's nothing to be done about it—can't afford a new suit."

"It isn't a question of a new suit—your best blue will look perfectly all right after I've pressed it. But you do need a new shirt, and a new tie and a new bowler hat and a nice smart pair of shoes and—"

He interrupted her. "You know I can't afford these things."

"You can, dear!" she declared with surprising firmness. "There's nearly sixteen pounds put by for our summer holiday. It'll be well spent if it helps to get the Morvens out of their trouble. Don't you agree?"

After a second's hesitation the colonel nodded slowly . . .

Anne was cooking the family's first breakfast in the cottage. Mark was with her. He turned to his father, who had just come in.

"Daddy, when are we going to leave?"

"We're staying till we're thrown out," Peter replied.

"Good-oh! Daddy, we ought to build a stockade and shoot the attackers when they gallop round it on horses."

The thought of Government inspectors whooping round the garden on rakish-looking mounts and brandishing their umbrellas appealed to Peter's sense of humor, and he laughed for the first time since he had arrived at the cottage.

"Not a bad idea!"

They had nearly finished breakfast when Mr. Langridge turned up again. "I am able to place before you an excel-

lent offer for this property," he announced.

"What do you mean?" Peter asked. "Anyone who bought it now would be crazy."

"Not necessarily so. You see, Mr. Morven, it's a matter of compensation. Some adjoining property owned by my clients, Benson Estates, is also to be seized and an assessment of its value has already been made by the inspectors. But the position is this: my clients were so dissatisfied with the sum offered them that they got counsel's opinion. Now they've been advised that if they could add your property to theirs they'd have a strong case for demanding a much higher rate of over-all compensation based on a re-assessment."

"It sounds pretty phony to me," commented Peter.

Mr. Langridge looked pained. "You must realise that the whole question of payments in cases of this kind is a very intricate one. However, I think all I need add is that my clients can afford to risk substantial sums in obtaining the best legal advice."

"And we can't afford any at all," Anne said.

"How much do you think they'd offer us for the cottage?" Peter asked.

"I feel pretty sure they'd go up to half the sum you paid for the property," replied the agent.

"You can tell them to go to blazes."

Anne exclaimed: "Hey, Pete, wait a minute! We must talk this over. We might get a few hundred pounds more by selling the cottage now instead of waiting for it to be taken from us."

Mr. Langridge nodded his approval. "All right, we'll think about it," said Peter with a sigh. "I'm sure you will appreciate

that there's a certain urgency over the matter, and so I shall take the liberty of instructing my clients' solicitors to prepare a conveyance."

Mr. Langridge moved towards the door. "I shall bring the deed here at six thirty this evening in the hope of obtaining your signature."

After the agent had gone, Anne looked at Peter. "Well, what do you think?"

"I think they're probably a lot of sharks," Pete answered. "But as we're bound to lose our home in any case, I suppose we may as well let it be snapped up."

At a quarter to five that afternoon the colonel was shown into the office of his former subaltern, whom he had not seen for twenty-five years. It was a very untidy office with several strange pieces of equipment littered about the room and futuristic-looking diagrams piled haphazardly on tables.

Major-General Ovington, stout and bald-headed, rose from behind his desk, reflecting that his first C.O. had changed very little in appearance; the old boy was dressed to the nines, just as he always remembered him, and the years had not dimmed that dangerous glint in his eyes.

"How are you, Ferret?" asked the colonel, and as they shook hands he glanced sharply down at Ovington's brass buttons, which perhaps did not shine as brightly as they might have done. Ovington did not miss that glance and for a moment he experienced the curious sensation of being a second lieutenant in the orderly room instead of a General in the War Office.

"Very well, thank you, Colonel," he answered. "It's good to see you again."

"Hm! I hope you'll still think so after we've had a talk, Ferret." The colonel looked round. "Bit of a mess in here, eh?"

"I'm sorry. I'm afraid there is," Ovington smiled apologetically.

"You know, that's exactly what you said when I inspected your troop-stables before the C-in-C's inspection in Sialkot. Remember?"

"Yes, I think I do." The major-general pulled up a chair. "Do sit down, won't you?"

"Thanks. Now, what I want to talk to you about is a cottage you've pinched near Oxford. It's just been bought by some youngsters I know—in fact, they only moved in yesterday—and I imagine they're pretty cut-up at being served with a 'notice to treat.' Don't you think it's rough luck on 'em?"

Ovington looked concerned. "I certainly do. I'd like to help these people, but it's extremely unlikely that I can. If you don't mind waiting a moment, we'll take a look at the area and see how the land lies. But remember, I can't promise a thing."

He pressed a speaker-switch and asked for the map. A pretty W.R.A.C. captain came in with it and spread it out.

"Now this thin red line indicates the proposed extension of our boundaries," explained Ovington, pointing. "Where's your friends' cottage?"

"Pear Tree Cottage it's called. Good heavens, there it is, right on the boundary!" exclaimed the colonel.

"Yes. We were told it was uninhabited and derelict."

"Well, it's nothing of the kind. Ferret, this is one of those occasions in military history when the 'thin red line' has to make a tactical withdrawal."

"You're right. It does look like a matter for further investigation," agreed Ovington with a slight frown. "I can assure you the very last thing we'd do would be to take someone's home if it could possibly be avoided."

The colonel eyed him stonily. "Then what's your next move?"

"What capital news!" he said stiffly. "May I be the first to congratulate you?"

When he had gone, Peter and Anne walked out into the garden, where Mark ran to join them.

"Pete," said Anne, taking her husband's arm, "I'm so full of gratitude I want to do something nice for someone."

"You can give me a kiss."

"I meant for someone outside the family."

"Anyone special in mind?"

"Well—you'll think me crazy—but it's the Hallerfields. In the end they were so sweet to us."

"You know, they can't have much of a life, and I got the impression that if we really invited them to stay when we're settled in, they'd come."

"Let's do that," Peter said. "Somehow I'd rather like them to be our first guests."

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Now he knew money wasn't everything  
... a charming short short story

By ADRIEN HILLIER

# THE QUIET TIME

CLIVE CONNOR had achieved quite a lot in his forty-five years. His large importing business ran smoothly and prosperously. Money multiplied magically at his touch. He spent it generously, throwing both it and his incredible energy behind the numerous committees and projects he was asked to help.

Into the growing pattern of the city his name was being woven in bright threads, and if his moments for quiet thought were rare, Connor did not begrudge this, because life was full and ambition still drove him onwards with eager enthusiasm. Later on there would be days in which to relax and think of all the things he'd never had time to consider.

"You've got a board meeting at two o'clock," his secretary said coldly, "and a town planning committee at four."

"Why the frigid tone, Dickie?" he asked, raising his eyebrows innocently. Helen Dickson had been with him since the beginning of his success a long time before, and sometimes he wondered just how much of it he owed to her.

"You know why," she said. "You're wearing yourself out—you don't look well. Who's going to care about how successful you are or how many committees you belong to after you've gone."

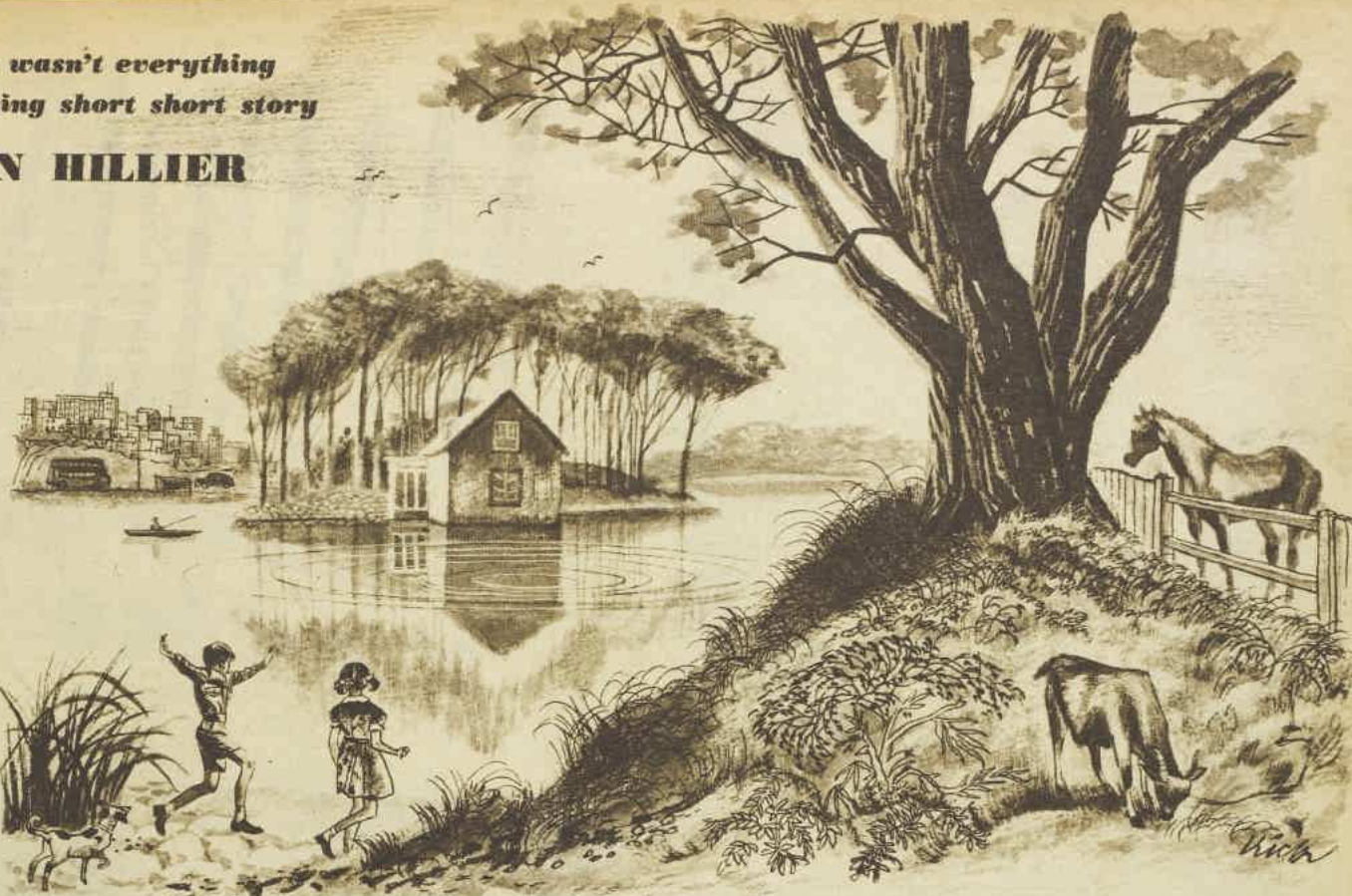
"You will," he grinned. "You'll have to straighten everything out—tie up all the loose ends."

"Do you really imagine," she asked, her brown eyes snapping at him, "that I'd give any part of my life to sorting out other people's problems?"

"I can imagine it," he said. "But, go on—what else do you want to do with your life?"

She rolled a fresh sheet of paper into the typewriter savagely and fastened her eyes on it.

"Nothing," she said shortly. "It's nearly two o'clock now."



Down by the river bank children were playing happily, skimming stones over the water.

He looked at her questioningly. How old would she be, he wondered? Perhaps ten years younger than himself, he supposed. He'd never really thought about it before. How pretty her hair was, he mused—dark, with glinting lights in it. It looked soft, like silk, and he wondered suddenly how it would feel to touch.

"I've got another appointment at three o'clock," he said absently as he picked up his hat.

"Where can I reach you," she asked, "if anything crops up?"

"Nowhere," he said, with his hand on the doorknob. "It's private."

It was after four o'clock by the time he was through with his second appointment, but he had forgotten the town-planning committee. He walked down the hill, forgetting also that his car was parked farther up. He walked quietly, as though afraid of hearing his own footsteps, and when he came to the intersection he paused, not knowing which way to turn.

A tram halted for the traffic lights, and, without knowing why, he crossed to the safety zone and boarded it just before the bell clanged and it lurched forward again. The tram was crowded, but Connor was alone in a quiet world of fear and doubt.

As they jerked over the bridge, he looked out the window and down at the river glistening silver in the afternoon sunlight.

"I wish I could be on one of those boats," a small boy near him said wistfully, and Connor's world became peopled again, startlingly and vitally.

"I wish I could be, too," he said. "It's something I always wanted to do."

The child looked at him unbelievably. "If I was a man," he said, "I'd go on those boats whenever I wanted to. I'd do everything I wanted to do."

"Well, that's something you can't do," Connor reflected. "You can't do everything you want to do—you can't fit it all into one life. You have to decide what you want to do most of all."

"Tell you what," he said to the child, quietly so that his mother would not hear. "Here's some

money, and when you get the chance you can go on one of those boats."

He got off at the next stop and walked back over the bridge and down the narrow stone steps to the river bank. He walked hesitantly, in suppressed excitement, because at that moment, it seemed to him that to see the river of water and the small paddle-boats chugging along it was the thing he wanted to do above anything else.

A newspaper boy thrust a paper at him, and, looking into the child's anxious eyes, he thought that the boy was too young to be concerned just yet with the making of money.

"What do you want most in the world?" he asked impulsively.

"A red-and-white bike with a fixed wheel," the child said promptly.

Just as easy as that, thought Connor enviously.

"All right," he said, pulling out his wallet and counting off some notes, "take this and get one while you've got time."

An old man sat on the wooden seat on the grassy slope. Connor sat down beside him. The river didn't glisten so much when you got near to it, he thought regretfully, and the boats were just rather grubby little vehicles moored to the bank for the night. It was too late, he told himself sighing, and hoped that the small boy on the tram would get his wish while the dreams still clouded his eyes.

From one of the boats music came fitfully from a badly tuned wireless and he wished desperately that he could flick a switch and turn it off. Music was bad medicine when you were searching your heart and trying to fit into a fraction of time all the things you'd ever wanted to do.

The old man shuffled his feet and Connor asked abruptly, "Got everything you want?"

"I guess so." The weak blue eyes were surprised and then crafty. "Except maybe a cigarette." He took the proffered packet with a widening smile. "You one of those welfare blokes or something?"

"No," answered Connor with a

small smile. Hard to tell a down-at-heel old man that you were looking for something you'd never had time to think about. There weren't many people you could say those things to. He thought suddenly of Helen Dickson and her soft shining hair and how it would be to bury his face in it. He thought of it with a leaping in his heart and again with an aching regret.

"You got everything you want?" the old man asked, lighting the cigarette with loving care.

"No," answered Connor, "and it's too late now."

His companion scratched his stubbly beard. "A young bloke like you—now if I was your age—"

"What would you do?"

"Well, look at that," the other pointed a shaking finger down towards the river bank. Two children played there, skimming stones over the water with earnest deliberation. Connor looked at them and back at the old man questioningly.

"I'd have some of those," he said, fingering his beard again. "I thought I'd do better on my own—keep everything I got for myself. That way you end up with nothing and nobody cares what happens to you."

"What if you've done good things?" Connor asked tensely. "Left a sort of monument to your name?"

"Doesn't mean so much," the old man said, "Not like flesh and blood."

You're right, thought Connor silently, it doesn't mean so much. You've never known anything but trying to build your own glory. You've never loved and created and loved again, so that it didn't matter what the reward would be, but only that the love and the creation should be cherished, and guarded exultantly and selflessly.

The children came up the grassy slope and walked past them, their pockets bulging with stones and their small faces sober with happiness. Connor got up slowly and

emptied his wallet into the old man's hands.

"I wish it wasn't too late," he said.

The building was in darkness when he got back, excepting for the one light which glowed from the window of his office. He opened the door slowly.

"Still here?" he said and Helen looked up from her empty desk.

"I had to stay," she said, "where have you been?"

He sat down heavily. "I've had a quiet time," he told her, "I've ridden in a tram and sat on the river bank and watched children throw pebbles into the water."

Her eyes were afraid. "What was your second appointment?"

"It was with Doctor Kane," he answered, not looking at her, "I mightn't have much time."

She was beside him, her head just above his.

"There were so many things I wanted to finish," he said, "and other things I wanted to begin."

"They'll get done," she said. "What are they?"

The words were being dragged from his throat—things he knew he had no right to say.

"I wanted to marry you, Helen," he said.

Her arm was around his shoulders, drawing his head towards her, until he felt the softness of her close against him.

"Clive," she whispered, and the happiness in her voice made him look up at her wonderingly.

"Even for such a little time?" he questioned hesitantly, "is it what you really want?"

She nodded.

"More than anything else?"

"More than anything else in the world."

He sighed and drew her down until his face was buried in her hair. It was soft, like silk, just as he had known it would be.

(Copyright)



# MARRIAGE

was her racket

**I**N the early summer of 1936 I received word that an aunt, whom I knew but slightly, had died in France and that she had willed me her house in the hills behind the French Riviera.

The news reached me in New York a few days before I was due to sail for Europe in the old *Berengaria*. The sailing day—not that it has the least importance—was July second. I am tempted to be precise about this because I wish to emphasise that it was on this sailing day, in the small midships bar, that I met Sam Bolton for the first time in my life.

It has been alleged on more than one occasion that Sam and I were old friends long before this date. If this were true—and I most solemnly affirm that it is not—Therese might have some justification for the unpleasant things she has said about me. But this is getting ahead of my story.

Sam and I seemed to like each other on sight. We had a couple of drinks together before going down for lunch and arranged to sit at the same table. I had some business in London, after which I planned to go down to the French Riviera to look at the house I had inherited. Sam, who was at a loose end, fell in with my plans eagerly, with the result that in London we bought a small car for the drive across France.

We drove southward out of Calais in the early afternoon of a blazing July day, and around six o'clock entered the market place of a small Normandy town whose name, if I ever knew it, I have forgotten. At the far end of the square, seen through a green tunnel of plane trees, was a

pleasant-looking hotel called the Grand Cerf.

On the outskirts of the town we had passed an even more pleasant-seeming hotel called the Cheval Blanc. Just why we did not stop there, I don't know, but it is decisions of this nature which so often govern our lives.

It was the aperitif hour when Sam and I, bathed and changed, found a vacant table in the space reserved for the hotel under the tree. We ordered our drinks while waiting for dinner, but I noticed that Sam had grown unaccountably silent. I don't think he saw me; his eyes were fixed on a spot over my left shoulder.

"Have you ever in your life seen a more beautiful girl?" said Sam at length in a dazed, awestruck voice.

I turned to look in the direction indicated. "Yes, often," I replied tersely. "There are half a dozen better-looking girls sitting around these tables right now."

At Sam's insistence, I moved my chair in order to get a better view of this vision of loveliness. She was tallish, with quite good features. But she had cold bluish-green eyes, set too close together.

She was evidently the daughter of the house, for in France supervisory jobs in small hotels and restaurants are seldom given to outsiders. Then a poor wretch of a waiter made an error in a bill, and I watched while those bluish-green eyes crackled with fury and the man winced under the lash of her tongue.

But Sam Bolton couldn't, or wouldn't, see what I saw. Therese—for that was her name—seemed to have numbed his critical faculties. At dinner we sat even closer to

her, and I was forced to admit that she had beauty of a kind. But it was the kind I don't like, for there was no warmth in it.

I was seeing Therese in a characteristic pose. There was a subtle something about her which reminded me of Kreisler, Elman, Heifetz, or one of the other great instrumentalists. Her fingers played so lovingly over the instrument in front of her that one knew, instinctively, that here, engaged as she was, she was finding fulfilment. Her touch was a caress. But the instrument, instead of being a Stradivarius, was a cash register.

It was with the greatest difficulty that I persuaded Sam to continue the journey on the following morning. He was ready to stay indefinitely at the Grand Cerf. This, he assured me, was no passing infatuation. He was—and for the first time in his life—deeply in love. Did I think he stood a chance?

"I don't know, Sam," I was forced to reply. "I haven't seen your bank balance!"

The coolness engendered by this lasted a couple of hundred miles.

My Aunt Violet's house was true Provencal, built in the eighteenth century, with stone walls thirty inches thick. An olive grove forty-odd acres in extent went with the house. My aunt had spent a lot of money making and maintaining a gem of a Provencal garden and had expressed a desire that I should keep it up. Her trusted servant, Alphonsine, had remained on as caretaker, so that upon receipt of my telegram everything was ready for our arrival, even to some crisp cheese straws, fresh from the oven, which

**A complete short story By ROBERT STANDISH**



made their appearance with a bottle of cracking cold white wine.

There was a fine library, a well-stocked wine cellar, every vase was full of flowers, and the newly cleaned swimming-pool was being refilled.

Sam, as I already had cause to know, was a man of swift enthusiasms, but he amazed me that evening just before we went to bed by saying: "This is the kind of house I've always dreamed of, but never thought I would see, let alone live in. Do you want to sell it?"

"I don't think so," I replied, "but even if I did, what good would it be to you? You have your living to earn, like I have. Places like this aren't for young fellows like us. But it would be a wonderful place to retire to."

After rhapsodising for some minutes, Sam concluded: "Promise me that if you ever decide to sell you'll give me the first refusal."

I refused to promise because I didn't believe that his enthusiasm meant anything. I assumed that in another week he would have forgotten the house and Therese. But there I did less than justice to Sam.

Before leaving for the north I changed the name of the house. Hitherto it had been known by the name of the family which had originally owned it. In gratitude to my Aunt Violet's memory I called it the Mas des Violettes. It was doubly appropriate, for there was a fine bed of long-stemmed violets.

Nothing of note occurred on the northward drive until we came to the little Normandy town where Sam had seen Therese. Here—and I don't think Sam played any monkey tricks with the engine—we had a mechanical breakdown.

Sam spent the evening with Therese and on the following morning he tossed a bombshell into my lap. He intended to

allow me to return to London alone as Therese and he were to be married as soon as the legal formalities could be completed. Would I return to be his best man?

"I'm sorry, Sam," I replied with real regret, for I knew that our brief friendship would not survive what I was going to say, "but if you are fool enough to go through with this thing, you must do it without any help from me."

"What have you got against her?" Sam asked in a puzzled voice, for he was honestly unable to understand why I could not see her as he did.

"Since you ask me, Sam," I replied, "I don't like her rat-trap jaw. I don't like the sparks from those blue-green eyes of hers. I've seen more warmth in an iceberg. And it wouldn't surprise me to learn that she was given a cash register to play with in her cradle. She—she scares me, Sam. Look at the staff here. You can tell by their looks that they all hate her and are scared of her."

There was nothing more I could say or do. Indeed, I was conscious of having said too much. When I left the hotel the following morning, Sam let me go without a word. I was sorry, for I liked Sam. In fact, I think I still like him, but of that I am not entirely sure.

A letter from Sam reached me three weeks later, mailed from Paris. It was to the effect that he and Therese were married and were going to the United States to live. He gave me the address of a small-town bank somewhere in Connecticut of which he had previously told me his father was president. This conveyed little to me, for in 1936, toward the end of the depression, there were big-city bank presidents who were not conspicuously rich. But any kind of bank president must have sounded good to Therese.

In late 1938 there was a letter from

Sam telling me briefly that his father was dead and that he and Therese were sailing shortly for France. They hoped to find and buy a property close to the French Riviera. Meanwhile, would I care to put a price on the Mas des Violettes? Alternatively, would I consider renting them the house while they looked around?

Although I had visited the Mas des Violettes only once since Sam and I had stayed there together, I was reluctant to sell. For a few hours I did contemplate renting the house to Sam, but the thought of Therese there, cracking the whip and ordering the gentle Alphonsine about, as I had seen her behaving to the hotel staff, was quite unthinkable. I was shocked when I realised how profoundly I disliked Therese, although I had never even spoken to her.

I spent Christmas, 1938, at the Mas des Violettes and was embarrassed to learn, on arrival, that Sam and Therese had bought the adjoining property. Alphonsine told me that Therese had repeatedly demanded to be shown over the house, but that she had told her to obtain written authorisation from me.

My house and La Bastide, which Sam and Therese had bought, occupied twin hilltops. The houses were, I would judge, two hundred and fifty yards apart, but the acoustics were such that they might have been very much closer.

It was quite evident, within a few hours of my arrival, that the honeymoon was over. The quarrels seemed incessant and her shrill vituperation, in a mixture of French and English, destroyed the peace. Often it continued far into the night.

I did not invite them to the house. Nor did they invite me. I think Sam had told Therese what I thought about her, which would not have endeared me to her.

Sam, whom I met in the village, told me that his father had died a few months

Sam's eyes were on the girl at the cash register, as he said, "Have you ever seen such a beautiful girl?"

after he and Therese had arrived home with the intention of remaining there. Therese, however, had detested the life there, and in turn was cordially disliked by all Sam's friends and relations. On his father's death, Sam took his share of the estate in cash—I gathered there wasn't much—and, at Therese's urgent insistence, returned with her to France.

She had an uncle who was a speculative builder, and she convinced Sam that with his help they would make a fortune. Sam thereupon invested his entire capital in the property which adjoined my own. To be fair to Therese, the property was an excellent investment at the price paid, but the purchase left Sam without any ready money. He was dependent on Therese for the price of a packet of cigarettes.

"You were right," Sam told me. "All she really loves is money. Between ourselves, I can't take much more."

It did Sam good to talk, and I encouraged him to blow off steam. We drove down to Nice, and he decided to brave Therese's wrath by making an evening of it. Not that we did anything desperate. It was simply that she did not like Sam to come under any influence but her own, and I think, too, that she enjoyed the power which his penniless state gave her.

"Where I was a fool," Sam told me, "was putting up my entire capital to buy the land and buying it in our joint names. She would rather die of starvation than sell until she makes a profit. She's a peasant at heart, and the only two things in the world that have any value to her

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# SENSATIONAL! NEW ODO·RO·NO STICK DEODORANT



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## Letters from our Readers

### WEEK'S BEST LETTER

I WONDER how many women have found, as I have, that ten years of married life has changed their personalities, giving them a calmness, patience, and adaptability they never expected to be theirs? I remember the stress and strain I went through with my first child's minor—very minor—ailments, and my conviction that with a house and one baby I was slaving myself to death. Now, having pulled a number of children through whooping-cough, measles, chicken-pox, pneumonia, gastro-enteritis, and accidents, I find nothing ever surprises or ruffles me. I get through three times the amount of work I used to in half the time, and—funny enough—I have never been so happy in my life.

£1/1/- to Mrs. W. Forrest, 83 Balmoral Street, Waitara, N.S.W.

MY kitchen boasts a built-in divan, with three roomy drawers underneath and a plastic-type covered mattress on top. Three-year-old daughter never says "no" to a rest on the popular red mattress, baby often lies there happily watching me work, and even I am able to rest and at the same time keep an eye on the meal as it is cooking. P.S.: Even Father approves!

10/6 to Mrs. N. R. Grabbe, Roselt St., West Bundaberg, Qld.

AFTER a recent illness I spent a few weeks in a convalescent home, where the food was excellent, the staff friendly and efficient, and the surroundings beautiful. Yet a few women seemed determined to spoil what would have been a delightful holiday for the rest of us. From their conversation they appeared to spend a good part of every year in convalescent homes. How they do it puzzles me. I thought to get into such a home you had to be recovering from a genuine illness. It seems a shame that such women should be allowed to spoil the convalescence of those who need it.

10/6 to Mrs. I. B. Howard, 29 Watson St., Bondi, N.S.W.

IT is amazing how many parents threaten their erring children with "I'll tell the policeman," making them afraid of these helpful and most necessary men. These parents should realise that if a small child strays from its mother in a crowded place it is a policeman who will most usually care for him until the parents are located. Rather than frighten children, parents would be wiser to teach their children to trust policemen.

10/6 to Mrs. H. J. Warnock, Box 13, P.O., Paringa, S.A.

IF modern parent discipline is a failure and juvenile delinquency is due to laxity on the part of the parents, perhaps it would be fair and right for the parents to be punished by law as well as their delinquent offspring.

10/6 to Mrs. M. F. Concannon, Bartle Frere, Nth. Qld.

£1/1/- is paid for the best letter of the week as well as 10/6 for every other letter published on this page. Letters must be the writers' original work and not previously published. Preference will be given to letters signed for publication.

MAPS of the district should be displayed on all railway stations. These would be a great boon to strangers trying to locate unfamiliar streets.

10/6 to Mrs. N. Stone, 15 Learmonth St., Moonee Ponds W.4, Vic.

### For and against "Home"

I WAS amazed at Mrs. Emery's remarks (28/11/56) concerning her dislike of migrants calling the U.K. "Home." If they were born and grew up there it is home to them and always will be. Surely no persons worthy of their salt entirely reject their own country, no matter how happy they might be in a new land.

10/6 to Mrs. Joan Plumley, 88 Taylor St., Armidale, N.S.W.

WHAT a lovely letter Mrs. Emery wrote. I wish all migrants would think of Australia as their home. I agree that where your family is becomes "Home." We can move from State to State or district to district, but wherever we live with our families that is home. Australia can be a lovely place if we all do our part and try to be contented and sociable.

10/6 to Mrs. J. E. Wilson, 45 Levanto St., Mentone, Vic.

### Family affairs

• Each family is faced with problems that must be given a workable solution. Each week we will pay £1/1/- for the best letter telling how you solved your family problem.

ONE likes to be very fair to sons and daughters just starting work. Often their expenses are high and salaries small. We met the problem by charging board on a 25 per cent. of salary basis. This is quite a small amount, but the children were expected to continue giving light help in the house. The rate, being a percentage, can grow with their earnings. As they grow older heavier demands will be made on their time, and then certain tasks could be dropped and an extra 10/- per week paid for board. In our case this has been used to buy the best labor-saving equipment. We find that everyone is quite satisfied.

£1/1/- to "Harriet Hustle" (name supplied), Blackburn, Vic.

## Ross Campbell writes...

### MEN WANTED

A fair girl named Diane gave a squeal.

"Look, in the bus! A man!"

They all rushed to the verandah rail. A small, bespectacled man was getting out of the bus.

"I saw him first!" cried Diane.

"Nuts! It's every girl for herself," muttered Mona.



She went away to change her frock.

At dinner-time they clustered eagerly round the new arrival. His name was Thorold Meek.

"You remind me of Gregory Peck," said Diane.

"Who is he?" asked Mr. Meek.

"He's my favorite film star."

"I'm afraid I don't go to the pictures."

"Have you got a partner for the mixed doubles?" asked Dawn.

"I'm afraid I don't play tennis."

Mona, who was wearing her low-cut black ballerina, didn't say much.

But after dinner she whispered to Mr. Meek: "Come with me. I'll show you the scenery."

As they walked in the moonlight she said: "What is your hobby, Mr. Meek?"

"Prawns," he said.

"Did you say prawns?"

"Yes. That's why I save all the year to come up here. I'm studying the mating habits of the local prawns."

Next morning the girls were knitting again.

"Mr. Meek is not interested in girls," said Mona bitterly. "He's only interested in prawns."

"If you ask me, he is a prawn," said Diane.

Suddenly Dawn exclaimed: "I've got an idea! Let's lend our boy-friends the money to come up and see us on Saturday."

And so they did—interest free.

Which shows once more that a girl at the seaside doesn't always find other fish to fry.



## WONDERFUL AUSTRALIA

CHRISTMAS COMES with a blaze of scarlet to a 72-acre farm at Castle Hill, N.S.W. Owned by Mr. Eric Mobbs, the house is surrounded by some 140 Christmas-bushes, aged from ten to 15 years. *Ceratopetalum gummiferum*, its botanical name, is a native shrub found particularly in New South Wales. To many Australians it is more the symbol of Christmas than the traditional snow-tipped pine branch. Christmas-bushes at the Mobbs' farm flower from late November to early January. Each year the same pickers return to the farm. Among them is nurseryman Mr. Val Mitchell (pictured), of Waitara. His assistants are Nigel Vines (8) and sister, Elaine (4), whose father works on the farm. Picture by Clive Thompson, of Sydney. This is the last of our Wonderful Australia series. Next week we begin a new Australian color feature, details of which are on page 2

*Clerics' busy time . . .*

## From pulpit and altar, they tell great story

● In Christian churches throughout the world Christmas is a joyful religious festival for which clerics plan and prepare to convey to congregations the true meaning of the day.

IT is a busy time for them, although most people are holidaying, and their preparations start well before the day that marks the anniversary of the birth of Christ.

Here is the Christmas story of two clerics—one at a Sydney suburban church, the other at a Queensland coast resort.

Said the Rev. Richard Johnson, of St. Jude's Church of England, Randwick, one of Sydney's oldest churches: "It is the busiest day in my year."

"I am up at dawn so that the family gift-giving will be over before I take the first service at 6 a.m. My nine-year-old daughter Patricia insists on this."

"After the six o'clock service I take four other Com-

munion services—at 7, 8, 9.30, and 10.30 a.m."

This is Mr. Johnson's first Christmas at St. Jude's, and he is looking forward to speaking to many of his parishioners after each service.

"This takes time, so by the end of the last service I will probably have time to change from my robes and hurry to the Rectory (fortunately only 50 strides away) for the traditional midday dinner," he said.

"Then, with my family, I will spend the rest of the day visiting relatives."

"Christmas Day is at the end of a busy week," said Mr. Johnson. "On the Sunday before we hold a big evening service, comprising the Nine Lessons—the same service as is given at King's College, Cambridge, England."

"Different members read the lessons, and the darkened

church is lit by candles. It is impressive."

"During the week I visit 200 sick and aged, either in their homes or in the Randwick Auxiliary Hospital and the Sydney section of the Randwick Hospital, to give Communion."

"There are prize-givings for Sunday School classes, as well as preparing my Christmas Day sermon and a message for the parish paper."

### Brighter side

OF Christmas, Mr. Johnson said:

"An author wrote: 'Humanity must be forgiven for inventing Christmas'."

"Humanity did not invent Christmas. Christmas was an act of God, and yet there is a sense in which humanity has invented much of our modern Christmas."

"Some people feel that Christmas is only an excuse for having a good time, and it has been commercialised into a money-making period, losing much of its real meaning."

"That may be so, but that is humanity's invention, and for that man must be blamed."

"Charles Dickens contributed much to our celebration of Christmas. He helped to rescue old Christmas customs, and he invented a few of his own."

"The result was that Christmas became a happier time."

"This is right. We should not ignore the brighter side. Christmas is a festival, an event to be celebrated with gaiety and gladness."

"We cannot turn it into a day of mourning. On Christmas Day we should show how glad we are that Christ came into the world to share our lot."

"This can be best done by employing the family spirit of Christmas—not only the family in the home, but the family in the church."

"The great tragedy of the first Christmas was that there was no room for Christ. He was crowded out of the inn, just as people are crowding Him out of their hearts today in international spheres, in commerce, and in families. That is today's tragedy."

Parish priest at St. Vincent's Church, Surfers' Paradise, the Rev. Father J. N. Shannon, said that on Christmas Day he would probably be too tired to appreciate the fare when he sat down to Christmas dinner.

Surfers' will have a big share of the 60,000 holiday-makers who will move into the 30-mile-long Queensland Gold Coast during the Christmas season, and Father Shannon expects that at least 1000 will attend the midnight masses which will be said in St. Vincent's Church and in the parish schoolroom, built above the church.

As well as filling the church and school, they will crowd the verandahs surrounding the modern, two-storied building.

Big crowds will assemble again at St. Vincent's for masses at 6, 7, 7.45, 8.30, and 9.15 a.m., and at 7 p.m.

Father Shannon will have the help of two visiting priests in the holiday period.

### Simple crib

A FEATURE of Christmas decorations in all Roman Catholic churches is the crib—a replica of the stable where Christ was born.

In it is a statue of the Infant Jesus, surrounded by His Mother, St. Joseph, the Kings who followed the star to the manger, the shepherds, the ass, and the ox on a straw-covered floor.

Some cribs have been used in churches for many years and are large. Others are simple, made from crepe paper-covered boxes.

St. Vincent's crib is a simple one, but Father Shannon has placed it outside the church and has it spotlighted at night.

As St. Vincent's is on the Pacific Highway, hundreds of passers-by stop their cars to see it, and the crib is a Christmas landmark.



THE REV. RICHARD JOHNSON, for whom, like most clerics, Christmas will be the busiest day in his year, stands at the door of St. Jude's Church of England, Randwick, N.S.W. St. Jude's is one of Sydney's oldest churches.



CHILDREN kneel before the crib (a replica of the stable where Christ was born) the Rev. Father J. N. Shannon has placed outside St. Vincent's Church, Surfers' Paradise, popular Queensland south coast holiday resort.



LEFT: Choir-boys at St. Jude's, who have been practising for Christmas services for weeks under choirmaster Mr. Roland Egar, rehearse for Mr. Johnson. There will be five services at St. Jude's on Christmas Day.

ABOVE: Christmas congregation at St. Vincent's Church. To cater for the crowds of holiday-makers that pack Surfers' Paradise, Father Shannon has arranged midnight mass, five morning masses, and one at 7 p.m.

# The Spirit of Christmas...

"MANY merry Christmases, friendships, great accumulation of cheerful recollections, affection on earth, and Heaven at last for all of us."

—"Dr. Marigold's Prescription," by Charles Dickens.

## CHRISTMAS BELLS

I heard the bells on Christmas Day  
Their old, familiar carols play.  
And wild and sweet  
The words repeat  
Of peace on earth, good-will towards men!

And thought how, as the day had come,  
The belfries of all Christendom  
Had rolled along  
The unbroken song  
Of peace on earth, good-will towards men!

Till, ringing, singing on its way,  
The world revolved from day to day  
A voice, a chime,  
A chant sublime  
Of peace on earth, good-will towards men!

Then from each black, accursed mouth  
The cannon thundered in the South,  
And with the sound  
The carols drowned  
Of peace on earth, good-will towards men!

It was as if an earthquake rent  
The hearth-stones of a continent,  
And made forlorn  
The households born  
Of peace on earth, good-will towards men.

And in despair I bowed my head;  
"There is no peace on earth," I said;  
"For hate is strong  
And mocks the song  
Of peace on earth, good-will towards men."

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:  
"God is not dead; nor doth He sleep!  
The Wrong shall fail,  
The Right prevail  
With peace on earth, good-will towards men."

—Longfellow.

"AT earliest dawn we were awakened by wild, despairing shrieks, and were instinctively groping for our revolvers when we remembered the fatted fowls and Cheon's lonely vigil, and turning out, dressed hastily, realising that Christmas had come, and the pullets had sung their last 'sing-out.' When we appeared the stars were still dimly shining, but Cheon's face was as luminous as a full moon, as, greeting each and all of us with a 'Melly Clisymus,' he suggested a task for each and all. Six lubras were 'rounded up' for the plucking of the pullets, while the rest of us were sent out, through wet grass and thicket, into the cold, grey dawn to gather in 'big, big mob bough and mistletoe' for the beautification of all things.

Soon the gleaming boughs were piled high upon the iron roof of the Eastern verandah to keep our impromptu dining-hall cool and fresh. High above the roof rose the greenery, and over the edge of the verandah throughout its length hung a deep fringe of green, reaching right down to the ground at the posts; everywhere among the boughs trailed long strands of bright red mistletoe, while within the leafy bower itself, hanging four feet deep from the centre of the roof, one dense, elongated mass of mistletoe swayed gently in the breeze, its heaped-up scarlet blossoms clustering about it like a swarm of glorious bees.

Scissors and hand-glasses were borrowed, and hair cut and chins shaved, until we feared our Christmas guests would look like convicts. Then the Dandy produced blacking brushes, boots that had never seen blacking before shone like ebony. After that a mighty washing of hands took place, and then the Quarterers settled down to a general 'titivation,' Tam 'cleaning his nails for Christmas,' amid great applause. By eleven o'clock the Dandy was immaculate, the guests satisfied that they 'weren't too dusty,' while the Maluka in spotless white, relieved with a silk cummerbund and tie, bid fair to outdo the Dandy. Even the Quiet Stockman had succeeded in making a soft white shirt 'look as though it had been ironed once.'

"And then every lubra being radiant with soap, new dresses, and ribbons, the missus, determined not to be outdone in the matter of Christmas finery, burrowed into trunks and boxes, and appeared in cream washing silk, lace fichu, ribbons, rings, and frivolities—finery, by the way, packed down south for that 'commodious station home.'"

—"We of the Never-Never," by Mrs. Aeneas Gunn, Christmas, 1902

## SANTA CLAUS

"Halt! Who goes there?" The sentry's call  
Rose on the midnight air  
Above the noises of the camp,  
The roll of wheels, the horses' tramp.  
The challenge echoed over all—  
"Halt! Who goes there?"

A quaint old figure clothed in white,  
He bore a staff of pine,  
An ivy-wreath was on his head.  
"Advance, O friend," the sentry said,  
"Advance, for this is Christmas Night,  
And give the countersign."

"No sign nor countersign have I.  
Through many lands I roam  
The whole world over far and wide.  
To exiles all at Christmastide  
From those who love them tenderly  
I bring a thought of home."

"From English brook and Scottish burn,  
From cold Canadian snows,  
From those far lands ye hold most dear  
I bring you all a greeting here,  
A frond of a New Zealand fern.  
A bloom of English rose."

"From faithful wife and loving lass  
I bring a wish divine,  
For Christmas blessings on your head."  
"I wish you well," the sentry said,  
"But here, alas! you may not pass  
Without the countersign."

He vanished—and the sentry's tramp  
Re-echoed down the line.  
It was not till the morning light  
The soldiers knew that in the night  
Old Santa Claus had come to camp  
Without the countersign.

—A. B. Paterson.

"DURING Christmas Day the world gets its sense of values right. Love, tenderness, sympathy, understanding, kindness, thought for others, unselfishness, humility—these qualities get full marks. For most of the year they are assessed at little value. They lie like gems in a drawer covered with dust. Sometimes we open the drawer and look at them—on Sundays, for instance. We see them gleam dully, but we put them away and shut the drawer. At Christmas we take them out and wear them like a crown. They shine with all their glorious divine light and make glad the hearts of men."

—The Rev. Leslie D. Weatherhead, President of the Methodist Conference and minister of the famous, much-blitzed London City Temple.

## A CHRISTMAS CAROL

There's a song in the air!  
There's a star in the sky!  
There's a mother's deep prayer  
And a baby's low cry!  
And the star rains its fire where the Beautiful sing,  
For the manger of Bethlehem cradles a King.

—J. G. Holland.

"NOT believe in Santa Claus!

You might as well not believe in fairies . . . Nobody sees Santa Claus, but that is no sign there is no Santa Claus. The most real things in the world are those which neither children nor men can see. No Santa Claus! Thank God, he lives and he lives forever!"

—"Is There a Santa Claus?"  
by Frank Church.

## CHRISTMAS CAROL

One shall come walking,  
Walking into town,  
Dust upon His sandals,  
Dust upon His gown.

Who is this comes walking,  
Walking into town,  
Dust upon His sandals,  
Dust upon His gown?

He is the King of Glory,  
He is the Father's Son;  
Christ of Whom the story  
Never shall be done.

Sing then all ye nations,  
Sing of the Child was born  
Unto Mary, the Virgin,  
That first Christmas morn.

Tell out how the shepherds  
Heard in the winter sky  
Songs that the holy angels  
Sang from heaven on high.

Tell out how in splendor  
Shone the burning star,  
Naught in heaven might hinder,  
Naught on earth might mar.

—Mary Gilmore.



# THE WORLD AT CHRISTMAS



ABOVE. At the native hospital in New Britain, a medical assistant, dressed as Father Christmas, dispenses gifts and astounds the wide-eyed natives with his bright, traditional costume, beard, and multi-colored balloons.

THE spiritual significance of Christmas Day is remembered throughout the Christian world—from the sweltering heat of New Britain and the ice-mantled streets of Quebec to the long, lonely coast of Australia's north-west. These color pictures show some Christmas festivities in other lands.



CHRISTMAS TREE at Exmouth Gulf Station is an oil valve. Mrs. Gerry Lefroy with her children, John, Gerald, and Betty, and governess Jean Scott.



## Canadian snow capers

FRENCH - CANADIAN children have lots of fun tobogganing at Christmas. The icy winter will preserve their sturdy snowmen for up to two months.



NORWEGIAN fir tree, 100ft. high, dominates the electric candle-lit Mall at the Rockefeller Centre, New York. The tree takes a week to erect.



## Children wish, hope, wonder



"THINK HARD, Christine. What would you like for Christmas?" This is the message a puppet Santa has for six-year-old Christine McNeill, of Sans Souci, at a puppet show in a Sydney store.



TOO TIRED to care, Craig Collins, aged 3½ months, sleeps soundly in his basket, ignoring the man with the long white beard bent over him. But if Craig is too young to enjoy this Christmas, he will be wide awake next year.



"IT MUST BE a big doll, Santa, a bride doll, with curly gold hair and blue eyes that open and shut," wishes five-year-old Carol Smith, of Forest Lodge, as she posts a letter to Santa in the slot of a tall red box erected for children's Christmas mail.

## "Please, Santa, I want . . ."

● To children, Christmas is a season of wonder and delight. As well as the joy of opening presents on Christmas morning, there are the days before, when visits to town mean special requests to red-cloaked Santa Claus, happy hours in toy departments, and the puppet shows, wishing wells, and illustrated fairy stories arranged by stores to entertain young visitors.



"WHAT WILL I WISH FOR, a doll's house, a train set, or a motor car?" A group of children bend over a wishing well, deep in thoughts of that important Christmas gift.



CURLY HAired, three-year-old Danny Pullicin, of East Bankstown, enjoys his conference with Santa Claus. The pictures on this page are by staff photographer Ernest Nutt.

# THE QUADS AT CHRISTMAS



A NEW PET named Sooty II arrived before Christmas for the Sara quads and their elder brother, Geoff. Mr. and Mrs. Sara wanted the dog to be quite settled in his new home before Christmas. From left: Alison, Judith, Geoff, Phillip, Mark, and, of course, Sooty II himself.



LIKE ALL PUPPIES, Sooty II loves children, and the quads see that he has plenty of fun at their Punchbowl, N.S.W., home. Sooty I, who guarded the children when they lived at Bellingen, was killed by a car the day before he was to have joined them. Here, Alison (left) and Judith ask Sooty II to smile for the camera.



"WELL! That's one point of view, anyway," says Sooty II, taking an upside-down look at Mark. All five children help train and look after the puppy.

# *Santa pays an early call on the Luckes and Saras*



CHRISTMAS came early for the 17-month-old Lucke quads at their North Gooburrum home, near Bundaberg, Queensland. Although the significance of the season means nothing to them at this age, they're having a tremendous amount of fun with their presents and novelty-packed stockings. From left: Kevin, Jennifer, Veronica, and Eric.

# Viyella<sup>REGD.</sup>

IS IN SHORT SUPPLY  
SO BEWARE OF



## WOLVES in Merino Lambswool

Import restrictions have greatly reduced the availability of 'Viyella' and 'Clydella' and, as a result, inferior materials are sometimes being substituted for these world-famous fabrics that wash and wear so wonderfully. To obtain genuine 'Viyella' or 'Clydella' carefully check every purchase for the name as described below.



**MADE-UP GARMENTS**—Every garment made of 'Viyella' or 'Clydella' must carry a label, as illustrated above, bearing the name of the fabric from which it is made. If it does not carry this it is not genuine 'Viyella' or 'Clydella'.

**BY THE YARD**—A label carrying the name 'Viyella' or 'Clydella' is affixed to the selvages on every second yard. Insist on seeing it before accepting any material as genuine.

**RETAILERS**—When buying garments represented as 'Viyella' or 'Clydella' ensure that each one is tabbed with the correct label.

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## The Snelling line

... means chairs in the contemporary manner for the modern home.

We produce chairs in a variety of designs... lounge chairs, dining chairs, occasional chairs... each embodying the Snelling line which is contemporary without extremes, value without expense, comfort without stint. Shown here is our Seran-webbed Dining Chair available in a wide choice of colours—washable and colourfast.



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PRODUCTS  
PTY. LTD.**  
Box 4623, G.P.O.,  
Sydney, N.S.W.

### BUTCH



"Well, I think they're very sensible in warm weather."

### MOTHER



ELISABETH MACINTYRE  
"Please, Santa, bring me a bicycle, a watch, a bride doll, and a teaset—otherwise I can't possibly give the kids what they want for Christmas."

## It seems to me

By



Dorothy Dean

**C**HRISTMAS cards are extraordinarily difficult to choose. You can waste an inordinate amount of time poring over the selection on offer.

There are thousands of designs. But lots of them are hideous. Others are pleasing outside but have howlingly inappropriate verses or messages inside.

And some are charming but so un-Christmassy.

I bought a mass of these one year. It was only when I looked over them at home that I registered their unsuitability.

They were decorated with colored sketches of various creatures. The reindeer, birds, and choir-boys were fair enough. The cats, dogs, and fish got by at a pinch.

But I was left with two grasshoppers, one tortoise, a frog, and four remaining addresses.

Regardless of how I allotted them the cards simply would not do. They could, indeed, have been considered downright offensive. I went out and bought some others.

**C**ARDS for children represent a lesser problem, though I cast a disapproving eye on one batch I saw.

They carry messages such as: "Be a good child or Santa won't visit you."

Parents sometimes have to resort to cajolery and threats. They can't be blamed if they do so occasionally.

But it isn't the province of aunts and friends to put in an oar of this kind. The young couldn't be criticised for resenting such a greeting from one outside the family.

And mothers, quite rightly, would probably regard it as unwarranted interference.

**G**IVING evidence in America to a committee investigating wire-tapping, an electronics expert said that listening devices small enough to fit in women's "falsies" were sold in Hollywood.

*Foolish fellow, do not trust her  
With your secret. Take care lest  
She should tell you, gay deceiver,  
That it's locked within her breast.*

**A**FTERTHOUGHTS on the season's hats, commonplace enough by now. Wearing a modified version I met an acquaintance in a city lift the other day.

"That's one of those baskets," he said, looking mildly puzzled. "There appears to be quite a fashion for them."

It seemed too technical to explain that it was a lampshade, not a basket, and ungracious to reply, "Queen Anne's dead."

Another sidelight comes from a friend who had tea at a restaurant with a woman companion. Both wore large models drooping fashionably over their brows.

"They're no good for gossip," reports my friend. "When you start to whisper with your heads down you can't see each other. We had some juicy news to exchange so we took our hats off."

**U**NDoubtedly an inventive people, the Americans should take care less they fall into the Russian error of claiming credit for ideas originating elsewhere.

That thought is provoked by a news item from Salt Lake City, U.S.A., telling of a house made of tin cans.

"The idea of using the neglected tin can to build a home originated with Arnold O. Stagg, a tool and die maker," states the writer.

Oh, no, it didn't. I don't know where it did originate, but I do know that the kerosene tin shack was once an integral part of the scenery in this country.

The old four-gallon kerosene tin used to be the staff of life in the bush. Only thrifty people bought buckets or stove boilers.

Painted, with their edges cut and curled, the tins sheltered sword ferns and coleus on verandahs throughout the country.

A long time ago I was present when an elderly English clergyman was shown some watercolor paintings of bush scenes.

"Ah," he said in fruity English accents, adjusting his gold-rimmed glasses to examine one that showed blue hills and a rusty shack in the middle distance. "How truly Australian! Such a suggestion of kerosene tin!"

**L**ETTERWRITERS to "The Times," London, have been arguing fiercely about whether the costume of Santa Claus is of Russian origin. One man wrote: "Is it not high time that this dear old gentleman was clad in a manner more acceptable to the western world?"

*He's harnessing his reindeer, he's somewhere in the north,  
And chimneys swept and garnished await his setting forth,  
His sleigh will range to southward, and over east and west—  
Oh, do not let us quibble at the way that Santa's dressed.*

*In scarlet, with his leggings, and his beard as white as snow,  
He doesn't read the papers or hear the radio,  
And magic travels with him, dispelling ancient fears,  
So don't let's bother wrangling on the garb that Santa wears.*

*The world is torn and riven, the clouds hang black and low,  
Let Santa, please, stay looking as we knew him long ago.  
He doesn't carry weapons, he never had a vote,  
And he has no need for changing the color of his coat.*

## PLAN TO TAN



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FOR OILY SKINS

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WORLD'S MOST EXPERIENCED AIRLINE

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Stay as sweet as you are with  
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# Film Fan-Fare

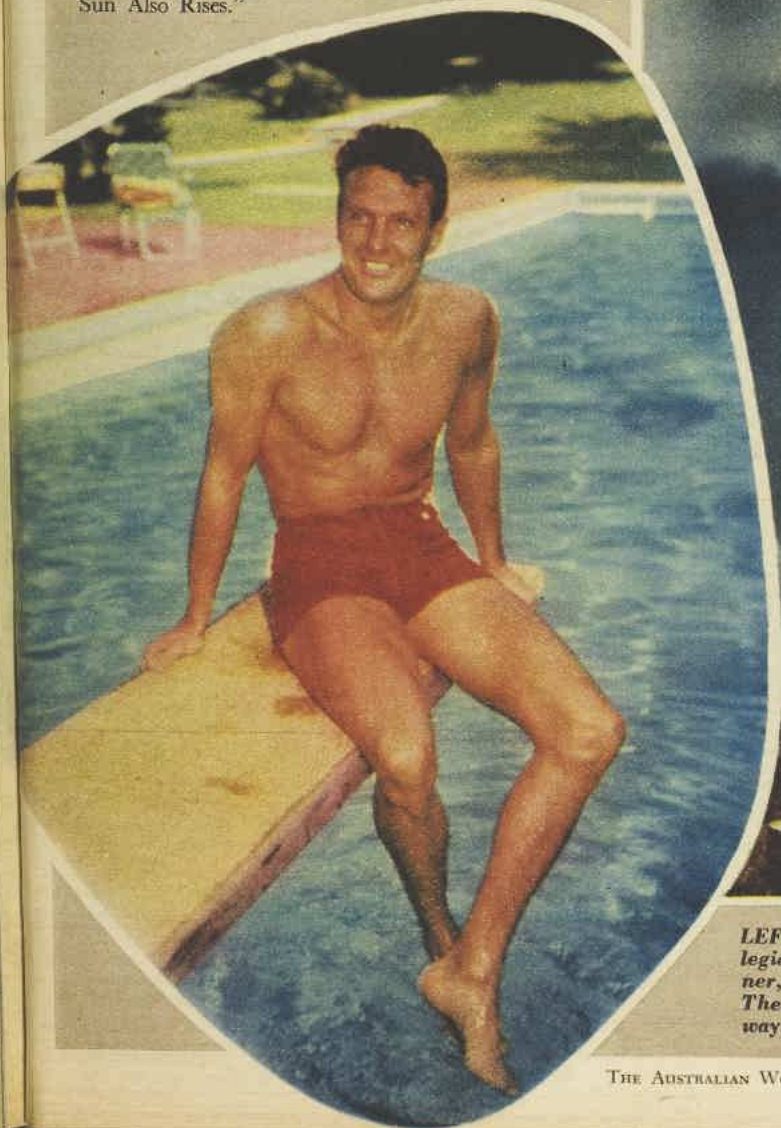
Conducted by  
M. J. McMAHON

## The Burly and the Beautiful

● Two of Fox's brightest hopes for top stardom are dark-eyed Rita Moreno and muscular Robert Stack. They are a study in career contrasts.

**R**ITA MORENO has shown that even if a young actress has loads of glamor and versatile talent it is sometimes hard for her to get going in films, especially if she is typecast. That is one of the reasons why Rita has gradually tempered the sultry personality that Hollywood built up for a less explosive one. In her case the change seems to be paying off. Rita now has a long-term movie contract in her pocket, and more serene roles are coming her way.

**R**OBERT STACK personifies the "local boy who made good" in Hollywood. He was lucky enough to be born with a silver spoon in his mouth and grew up in the inner circles of Los Angeles society. Later on young Stack, athletic and good-looking, was plucked from a local drama school for movies by a wide-awake talent scout and popped into a picture with Deanna Durbin, at that time a shining star. Then came World War II. Since then the name of Robert Stack has turned up in various big-budget pictures. He co-stars with Jennifer Jones in "The Sun Also Rises."



LEFT, Robert Stack, handsome in a collegiate way, has a cool and assured manner, is quietly ambitious about his career. The movie breaks keep coming Bob's way, but he has yet to make a big splash.



ABOVE, Rita Moreno, the erstwhile Mexican spitfire, can sing and dance as well as act. Her burning ambition is to succeed in films, but she has had few real chances. She's getting on by sheer hard work.

# Talking of Films

## ★ ★ Private's Progress

THE farcical misadventures of a bookish young man who finds himself pressed into the service in Britain's wartime Army during World War II is the theme of the new comedy, "Private's Progress."

The young man is Ian Carmichael, a new comedian of the gormless school of fun who has an innocent expression, a string-bean physique, and a huge talent for ineptness.

Carmichael is the sort of recruit who, having only recently arrived in camp, announces to a tough, spit-and-polish sergeant that he would quite like to miss a drill because he's "feeling rather fragile."

As entertainment "Private's Progress" is often hilarious.

It adopts a completely irreverent attitude towards British Army ways and characters, and guys the daylight out of everyone in sight from the blimps and arm-chair warriors right down to the spivs and shirkers and connivers in the ranks.

All of these are readily recognisable types who are notable for the wonderful knack of keeping their eyes on the main chance.

The mood of the film

changes slightly when the plot takes "Private's Progress" to Germany at the height of hostilities to enable Dennis Price's crooked colonel to steal a cache of art treasures from under the very noses of the enemy.

Most believable is the



**ACTOR Montgomery Clift** obligingly scrums an autograph for an eager young fan who managed to catch him in a quiet moment.

opening statement by the film's producers, the Boulting Brothers, which says "The producers gratefully acknowledge the official co-operation of absolutely nobody."

## OUR FILM GRADINGS

- ★★★★ Excellent
- ★★★ Above average
- ★★ Average
- No stars—below average

Sprightly performances come from Richard Attenborough as a crafty Cockney, and from Terry Thomas as a badgered major who cannot control his troops.

In Sydney—Century.

## ★ ★ Meet Me In Las Vegas

ONLY some of the glitter of Las Vegas, the fabulous American gambling city, comes to the screen in this musical starring Dan Dailey as a gambling cowboy and Cyd Charisse as a ballerina.

Producer Joe Pasternak, of Metro, with CinemaScope available, has missed the chance to show more than a fleeting glimpse of the city of Las Vegas by setting almost the whole of the film among poker machines, gambling tables, and lush cocktail-bars.

This is enough, of course, to make any gambling enthusiast wish for a one-way ticket to the U.S.A.

The story is a romantic affair, told with color and songs, about how Dan Dailey, a gangling cowboy who really owns a ranch, and the delightful Cyd are first brought together by the fact that when he holds her hand he can't lose at the tables.

When their association ripens into love, however, the hand-holding loses its magic because, as everybody knows, those who are lucky in love are supposed to be unlucky at cards.

The best of the dance scenes featuring beautiful Cyd Charisse is a modern version of the old Frankie and Johnnie theme.

The most charming interlude is the duet by a small Japanese girl and Dan Dailey.

Nobody needs to act much in this musical, but several catchy songs by Brodsky and Cahn are very well handled and should be hit-parade certainties.

In Sydney—St. James.



## PRISING OPEN POINTS

## WITH THE POWER STILL ON!

Attempting to adjust or repair any appliance or plug while it is still connected at the power point is just inviting disaster.

You expose yourself to great danger by meddling with electrical equipment.

Ignorance of elementary precautions is the cause of most accidents.

Leave all repairs to the electrician.

ISSUED BY

**THE ELECTRICITY AUTHORITY  
OF NEW SOUTH WALES**

# TELEVISION PARADE

● If you are suffering from televisionitis and intend to spend your Christmas crouched over your television set, all three stations have special programmes for Christmas.

CHANNEL 9 has a special series of programmes in their regular sponsored shows with a Christmas twang to them.

On Saturday, December 22, at 8 p.m., the episode in "The Scarlet Pimpernel" is called "Christmas Present." On the same night at 9 in "Racket Squad" there is a particularly heartrending story called "Christmas Capers."

The religious speaker in "Give Us This Day" on Christmas Eve will be Major-General the Reverend C. A. Osborne, a director of Television Corporation Ltd.

On Christmas Day two TCN programmes have a Christmas motif: "Father Knows Best" at 8 p.m. and "San Francisco Beat" at 9 p.m.

There is also talk at Channel 9 about a surprise Christmas Party on Christmas Eve.

Channel 2 will televise the Christmas Service from St. Andrew's Anglican Cathedral, Sydney, at 11 a.m. on Christmas Day.

The preacher will be the Dean of Sydney, the Very Rev. E. R. Pitt, and the service will be sung by the Precentor, the Rev. A. J. Glen-non.

The A.B.C. Children's Club on Christmas Eve will be devoted to a half-hour play by Robert Stuart, "Every Day Is Christmas," under the direction of John Appleton and Richard Parry. It will be seen on Channel 2 at 5.30 p.m.

On Christmas Day at 5 p.m. there will be a screening of Hans Andersen's fairy tale "The Little Match Girl."

In the evening at 8.30 "The Littlest Angel" will be shown.

Channel 7 will announce its Christmas programmes in the daily Press.

BOTH Channel 2 and Channel 9 televised the closing ceremony of the Olympic



Games, including the singing of the Olympic Song of Farewell, which with lyrics written specially by William Tainsh was sung to the tune of "Waltzing Matilda."

The song was sung by a choir of 1200 under the direction of Sir Bernard Heinze and accompanied by the Central Band of the Royal Australian Air Force.

A lot of viewers have written asking about the words of this song, and here they are: Homeward, homeward, soon you will be going now, Momok wonargo ora go-yai, Joy of our meeting, pain of our parting, Shine in our eyes as we bid you goodbye.

Refrain: Goodbye, Olympians, goodbye, Olympians, On comes the evening, west goes the day.

Roll up your swags and pack them full of memories, Fair be the wind as you speed on your way.

Blessing attend you, fortune befriend you, All good go with you over the sea.

May the song of our fathers, "Will ye no come back again,"

COMPERE of the A.B.C. Children's Club, Mari Rossi, with two of her children around the A.B.C. Christmas tree that will be used in the A.B.C. Children's Club.

Sing in your hearts thro' the years yet to be.

Refrain: Come to Australia, back to Australia.

Mist on the hills and the sun breaking through.

With the sliprails down and the billy boiling merrily, Wide open arms will be waiting for you.

Note: Momok wonargo ora go-yai—translated from aboriginal—is, Farewell brother bye and bye come back.

★ ★ ★

IF you are interested in Australian books and their authors I suggest that you look in at Colin Simpson's Sunday night session, "Books and their Authors." Simpson is himself a notable Australian author and he discusses books and brings authors and critics into the studio with him to argue about them.

Simpson spreads the good word on Channel 7, Sundays at 6.45 p.m.

—R. C. PACKER

## CITY FILM GUIDE

### Films reviewed

CAPITOL.—★ "Safari," technicolor CinemaScope African adventure, starring Janet Leigh, Victor Mature. Plus "He Laughed Last," technicolor musical comedy, starring Frankie Lane, Lucy Marlow.

CENTURY.—★ ★ "Private's Progress," comedy, starring Ian Carmichael, Richard Attenborough, Dennis Price. (See review this page.) Plus featurettes.

ESQUIRE.—★ ★ ★ "Carmen Jones," CinemaScope color musical drama, starring Dorothy Dandridge, Harry Belafonte, Pearl Bailey. (Re-release.) Plus featurettes.

LIBERTY.—★ ★ "High Society," technicolor VistaVision comedy with music, starring Bing Crosby, Grace Kelly, Frank Sinatra. Plus featurettes.

LYCEUM.—★ ★ ★ "My Sister Eileen," color CinemaScope musical comedy, starring Janet Leigh, Betty Garrett, Jack Lemmon. Plus featurettes.

LYRIC.—★ "Cell 2455, Death Row," biographical drama, starring William Campbell, Robert Campbell, Kathryn Grant. Plus "Women's Prison," drama, starring Ida Lupino, Jan Sterling, Cleo Moore. (Re-releases.)

MAYFAIR.—★ ★ "Smiley," technicolor CinemaScope adventure-drama, starring Ralph Richardson, John McCallum, Colin Petersen. Plus "Miracle on 34th Street," comedy-drama, starring Macdonald Carey, Teresa Wright.

PALACE.—★ "While the City Sleeps," SuperScope crime-drama, starring Dana Andrews, Ida Lupino, Rhonda Fleming. Plus "Rose of the Yukon," Western, starring Steve Brodie, Myrna Dell.

REGENT.—★ ★ ★ "The King and I," color CinemaScope

55 musical drama, starring Yul Brynner, Deborah Kerr, Rita Moreno. Plus featurettes.

ST. JAMES.—★ ★ "Meet Me in Las Vegas," technicolor CinemaScope comedy with music, starring Cyd Charisse, Dan Dailey. (See review this page.) Plus featurettes.

SAVOY.—★ ★ ★ "French Can-Can," French-language technicolor musical comedy (English sub-titles), starring Jean Gabin, Maria Felix, Francoise Arnoul. Plus featurettes.

STATE.—★ ★ "Simon and Laura," technicolor VistaVision comedy, starring Peter Finch, Kay Kendall, Ian Carmichael. Plus featurettes.

### Not yet reviewed

EMBASSY.—"The Lady Killers," technicolor crime-comedy, starring Alec Guinness, Katie Johnson, Cecil Parker. Plus featurettes.

PALLADIUM.—"Hoodlum Empire," crime drama, starring Brian Donlevy, Vera Ralston. Plus "House of Lost Women," drama, starring Freda Jackson, Laurence Harvey.

PLAZA.—"Lady and the Tramp," Walt Disney's all-animated technicolor CinemaScope feature. Plus featurettes.

PRINCE EDWARD.—"Pardners," technicolor VistaVision comedy with music, starring Dean Martin, Jerry Lewis, Jackie Loughrey, Lori Nelson. Plus featurettes.

VICTORY.—"Frances in the Haunted House," comedy, starring Mickey Rooney, Virginia Welles, Paul Cavanagh. Plus "Congo Crossing," adventure drama in technicolor, starring Virginia Mayo, George Nader, Michael Pate.

# Battle of sexes



• A technicolor, wide-screen comedy of varied characters and backgrounds, "The First Travelling Saleslady" (R.K.O.) stars blond Ginger Rogers and introduces comedienne Carol Channing.

Set in 1897 in New York and in the wide-open prairie country of America, the story casts Ginger as a woman with a flair for salesmanship and a fixed opinion about equal rights for women.

While attempting to revolutionise the corset industry by popularising steel corsets instead of whalebone ones, she runs into a lot of trouble.

But this is nothing compared to the problems that clutter her path in trying to sell barbed wire in Texas.



**1 DELIVERING** a case of steel stays to a Broadway show, Rose (Ginger Rogers) has sharp words with Charlie (Barry Nelson), an auto fan.



**2 THE CORSET** idea backfires. The Purity League closes the show and boycotts everyone handling Rose's corsets. Desperate, Rose goes to call on her biggest creditor, the Carter Steel Company.

**3 TALK** with James Carter (David Brian), right, the steel tycoon, results in a contract for Rose as a saleslady. Her job, and that of her friend Molly, is to sell barbed wire sent to Texans to fence their lands as required by law. But the ranchers say the wire is dangerous.



**4 ON THE WAY** Rose and Molly (Carol Channing) are entertained by Texan Joel Kingdom (James Arness), who gives them a wire order but plans to defeat them. When Rose finds out it's too late, Kingdom has the girls arrested.



**5 GAOLED** on a charge of cruelty to animals, the girls are rallied by Carter, who comes to propose to Rose, and by Charlie, who happens to be passing through the town. Rose turns Carter down and prepares to face the court action.



**6 AT THE FIXED TRIAL**, a steer allegedly cut by barbed wire is introduced as evidence against the girls. Outside the court pandemonium breaks loose when ranchers' wives stampede a herd of cattle into the town square, which they have enclosed with a wire fence.



**7 WATCHED** by all, the steers storm into the fence without sustaining injury. The point is made, Rose wins the trial, and orders for wire pour in. Then, with Charlie, Rose heads happily into the 20th century.

Continuing . . .

## Word in Season

from page 3

up for her, because Kenneth would be there, and so would Edward, and they'd both adore to bring her home. Then she had gone off to dress.

It was only then that Points, who was a very cautious, formal dog, had ventured to remove his own crown. Now he crushed it under a thoughtful paw and lay still, worrying.

Michael's misery was bad enough, but Points' private problem was quite frightful. Should he speak?

As almost everybody knows, all domestic animals have been granted the power of talking during the hours before midnight on Christmas Eve. The fact that they so seldom avail themselves of the privilege is understandable.

Over the years, they have discovered to their cost how terribly unlucky talking can be. Every puppy, kitten, and foal imbibes a wise mistrust of the favor with his mother's milk.

A great deal of emotion must be stirred up before the necessary power to take the step can be summoned, and the simple intellectual problem of what on earth to say to a loved one after being on silent intimate terms with him for a very long time appears most formidable when the moment arrives.

Points himself had been brought up on the story of his ancestor, Rufus the Second of Anjou, who had possessed an adored master of pronounced political views. This godlike person had liked nothing better in life than to sit of an evening, with a glass in his hand and his red friend at his feet, brooding on the sins of the Government of the day.

For three parts of a dog's lifetime they had been ideally happy; but one sad Christmas it had occurred to Rufus to risk the traditional misfortune, and he studied for a year and a day to discover just the right remark to please his hero most.

Finally the great evening arrived, and they sat together as usual by the winter fire. Ten minutes after the clock had struck eleven, Rufus raised his head, looked his friend straight in the eyes, and said distinctly, "Roosevelt be damned!"

The blow fell instantly. The man sprang to his feet, knocked over the decanter, tore off his collar, and sent at once for his own vet, who gave orders that changed his beverage into milk and his temper into bitterness. Most cruel of all, he could never bear Rufus in his sight again.

Points was not afraid of any such reaction from Michael. The danger he foresaw was of a very different kind. As he well knew, his personal weakness was shyness. The trouble was that Sarah had said that if he would talk they would put him on television and make a fortune.

When he heard this, chill horror half struck deep into his soul.

Points saw quite a lot of television. Sometimes Michael left it on for him by mistake on purpose when he was to be left alone in the apartment of an evening, and one night he had seen the judging of the finals at Madison Square Garden.

No in-bred Victorian miss suddenly confronted by a bathing-beauty contest at Atlantic City could have reacted more violently than had Points to that programme. He had sat alone before the screen, his eyes bulging and his neck hairs bristling as at an enemy.

The idea of a gentleman having his feet examined, his tail measured, his teeth discussed, in public, before a critical audience, not only in a vast arena but at the same time in every living-room throughout the

nation, shook him to depths he did not know he possessed.

Ever since that night the prospect of appearing on TV himself, uttering his secret thought, had haunted him so horribly that he trembled whenever he even considered it.

It was the church clock chiming the three quarters after eleven that pulled him together. Sarah was still singing but was making it clear that she was coming to the end of her preparations.

He looked at Michael and, with that ecstatic sympathy that is the great canine gift, felt his unhappiness even more acutely than the sufferer himself. Recklessness seized him, and he faced the fearful consequences with courage.

Raising himself gracefully to his haunches, he laid a red paw on the beloved knee. Then, summoning every ounce of energy in his nervous system for the supreme effort, he opened his mouth carefully.

"I love you," he said clearly.

Michael regarded him dully with brooding, pain-filled eyes. His hand caressed the floss-silk ears.

"I know you do, old pal," he said absently. "I know you do."

They were sitting there, perfectly still, Michael half comforted, Points dumb with gratitude at the danger past, when Sarah came sweeping in three minutes later.

She paused in the doorway, looking around suspiciously like a guilty little girl, mystified and curious. At last she sidled over to Michael and stood directly in front of him.

"Whom were you talking to? Someone was here; I heard you."

Michael regarded her sombrely from beneath lowered lids.

"I was chatting with my best friend," he said with dignity, "with a very decent, self-respecting gentleman whose company I much prefer to any I can hope to meet at the Chet Thomas' this evening. We're very comfortable, aren't we, Points?"

Points was too overcome to reply. He opened his mouth and made the effort, but emotion choked him, so that he could only produce a slight rumble in his throat.

Sarah began to laugh. She could laugh like nobody else; the sparkle welled up into her eyes until they trembled and glowed like jewels. She threw her arms around Michael and swarmed all over him until she was seated on his knee and was caressing Points with one nylon-shod foot.

"Oh, darlings," she said, "you are adorable fools. It's no good, Michael, I do love you better than anybody else in the world. You're such an ape—who else would sit here making up a voice for Points so that you could have somebody to talk to? I heard the two voices distinctly. All right, my pets. You win. We'll stay in. What were you telling each other? Secrets?"

Michael's arms closed around her with that possessive satisfaction that requires no explaining.

"We spoke of family matters," he said primly. "Points feels we ought to have one. He's tired of watching television alone."

Points gave his tail a token swing and sighed. That was what he liked about Michael. He understood a fellow and never betrayed a confidence. Points might even have mentioned it to them both if the clock had not just then chimed the hour.

(Copyright)

## OSCAR-WINNING DOCUMENTARY

# Sharks, turtles are stars of this film

● This is the story of a remarkable underwater film, "The Silent World," which earlier this year won the top award at the Cannes Film Festival. A vivid and authentic record of marine life, it was made by French explorer Captain Jacques-Yves Cousteau.

THE most spine-chilling part of "The Silent World" is a gory sequence in which killer sharks attack and devour a disabled whale.

It should make Australians shudder even more to know that the orgy—and the underwater cameras spare no details—took place in the Indian Ocean, well within shark-cruising range of Australia.

Captain Jacques-Yves Cousteau, "patron saint" of skin divers and aqualung pioneer, made the film during a four-months' cruise by the Calypso, French oceanographic research vessel, which has been Cousteau's headquarters since 1950.

Thirteen years ago, Cousteau and Emile Gagnan, an engineer, invented a portable compressed-air underwater breathing device. The gadget, dubbed the aqualung, opened a whole new field of research and exploration into which scientists and sportsmen eagerly plunged.

"The Silent World," filmed in brilliant color and set to a haunting, other-worldly musical score, premiered in New York recently to rave reviews.

**Film Fan-Fare**

Earlier this year it ran away with the top award, the Golden Palm, of the Cannes international film festival. It was the first documentary to capture the prize in 20 years.

The judges must have been impressed, as I was, with the film's absolute integrity, the refusal of its producers to stoop to "hokey"—that is, contrived cleverness, of the sort popularised by Hollywood films, in which animals speak, dance, and

By  
**ROBERT  
FELDMAN,**  
of our  
New York staff

take on human characteristics by means of trick photography.

"The Silent World" plays no theatrical tricks.

There is not a single studio or tank shot in the whole production, only the reality and beauty of the actual sea as Cousteau's veterans of tens of thousands of dives find it. They made 5000 dives for the film alone. There are no actors, but only experts passionately engaged in divulging a true picture of their realm. Every scene was shot on and under the Indian Ocean, the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea, or the Mediterranean.

The things that the camera sees are extraordinary and fascinating. You don't have to be a skin diver to

thrill to the eerie exploration of a sunken ship, or to sense the exhilaration of the Calypso crew as they are welcomed to the Gulf of Aden by swarms of leaping, cavorting porpoises.

Cousteau's well-known book, "The Silent World," was published in 27 countries and has sold millions of copies.

Rather than re-enact experiences from the book, however, Cousteau chose to film an entirely new adventure saga.

He was given only four months' leave from the French Navy to do the job. Fortunately, the Calypso's log contained precise data on the date and place of every encounter during five years of wandering.

Louis Malle, the 23-year-old co-producer, worked out a careful shooting script which put the ship in exactly the right place at just the right time.

"We missed only one rendezvous—with a manta ray," Cousteau told me, "but we decided we could afford to pass him up. He's a dull fish, anyway."

The shark orgy occurred while the Calypso was chasing playful sperm whales—and getting some rare close-up movies of the whales' blow-holes in action. A calf, lagging behind the pack, was swept under the ship and into a propeller. Mortally wounded, the animal was mercifully put to death by a Calypso rifleman.

Within minutes, sharks appeared, although nobody on the Calypso had sighted any for days. They first prodded the carcass tentatively, then finding it to their taste, tore into the flesh in turn in a weird dance of

death, each shuddering in ecstasy as he digested his morsel.

With cameras grinding away both underwater and on the deck, the Calypso men, sickened by the spectacle, finally closed in to avenge the mutilated whale, spearing sharks right and left and clubbing them to death by the score on the deck.

The sequence is the most gripping in the film, its drama heightened by the shots of the tense-faced crewmen.

In the film the divers used a protective mesh cage for their underwater work during the whale tragedy.

"Ordinarily we do not need to take such precautions against sharks," Captain Cousteau told me. "In this case they were having a meal and it would have been suicidal for a man to get in among them."

If you have to meet a shark, Cousteau said, the best way is underwater and head-on.

"When a shark meets a diver underwater, the shark usually swims away, frightened probably by the escaping air bubbles from the aqualung," Cousteau observed.

Surface swimmers, he added, were the shark's favorite target because the shark was used to finding his meals among floating carcasses and garbage.

The lean, hawk-nosed explorer said that if he found himself in peril while surfing he would try heading determinedly towards the creature, rather than fleeing in panic.

"Sharks, I have observed, are somewhat like vicious dogs," Cousteau said. "Sometimes you can intimidate them by a false bravado and they will run away."

If none of the Calypso men has ever had an accident with a shark or any other fish, it's not for want of trying. In his book Cousteau tells of once tweaking a shark's tail underwater, and, another time, bumping one on the nose with the camera.

### Friendly groper

IN the film the skin divers in one of their colorful excursions through a field of brilliant tropical fish encounter a giant groper, the possessor of multiple rows of sharp teeth. Instead of running away, the men stay and find he is quite tame. They name him Ulysses, feed him some bits of meat, and then can't get rid of him.

Ulysses proves to be a regular ham in the true Hollywood tradition, ranging along to have his picture taken whenever an undersea cameraman appears.

He makes a pig of himself when the men are feeding the smaller fish, so the divers throw him into "gaol"—the anti-shark cage lowered

LEFT. A butterfly cod preens himself (centre) while a squirrel fish makes a side exit. Both species are found in the Indian Ocean and in waters north of Australia.

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THE AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S WEEKLY—December 26, 1956



CAMERA AT THE READY, a skin diver heads through a field of colorful Ruzsar fish in this scene from the prize-winning underwater documentary, "The Silent World."

from the Calypso. Grateful to be turned loose at last, Ulysses does a rhythmic waltz with one of the divers as he is teased with some hand-held bait.

Once the camera descends to 247 feet, the deepest level ever attained by a hand-held camera. (The record skin-dive is 307 feet.) In the Stygian gloom, illuminated only by the divers' battery-operated arc lights, two frogmen descend into an underwater cave harvesting lobsters.

Suddenly one of the men starts to do a comical turn. Instead of gathering the lobsters he begins gaily freeing them from his bag. In joyous abandon he starts to take off his breathing mask. But his companion quickly discerns what is wrong, overpowers the wacky one, and sends him forcefully towards the surface.

The man was a victim of the terror of skin divers, known variously as nitrogen narcosis, "the bends," or, to the French, "rapture of the depths." The extreme water pressure had forced a bubble of nitrogen into the victim's bloodstream, and, lodging in the brain, made him actually drunk. On the surface the diver "sobers" up in a decompression chamber for several hours while his companions have a lobster feast.

### Hunting eggs

CURIOUSLY, the most touching part of this underwater film takes place on dry land, on the beach of a deserted island in the Indian Ocean.

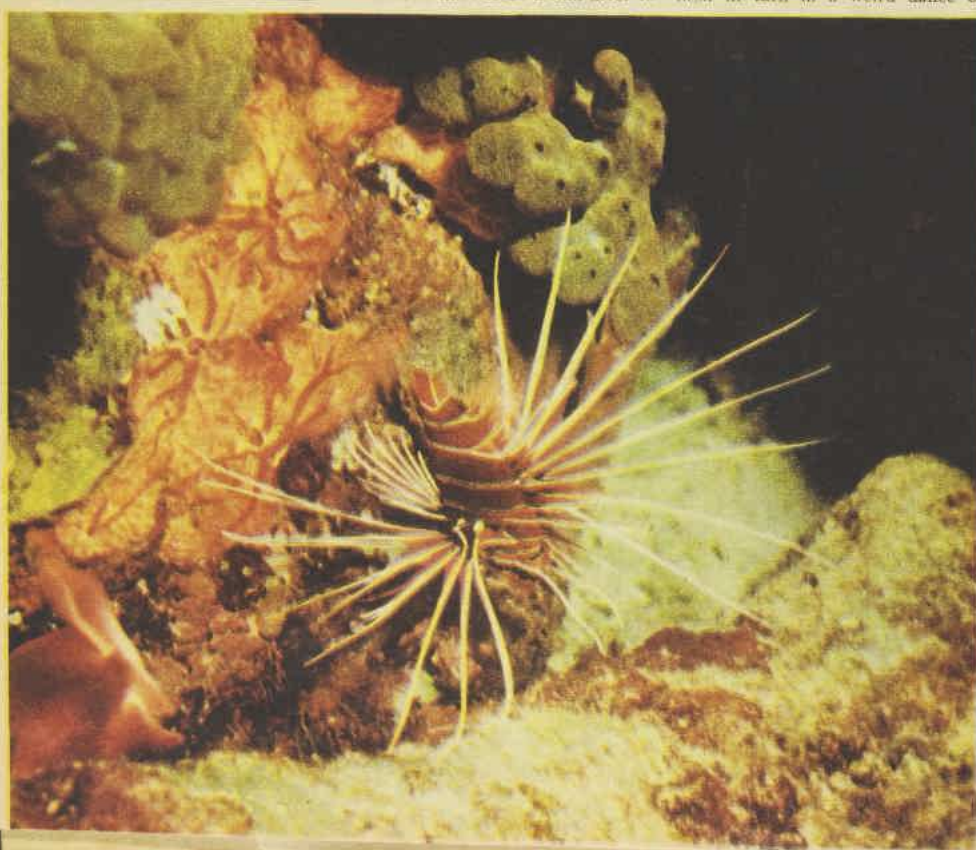
There two crewmen discover what appear to be the tracks of a large amphibious craft emerging from the sea. They are the tracks of a giant turtle. Following them they find a native boy digging in the sand. He is looking for eggs, he explains, and, with poetic simplicity, describes the life cycle of the giant sea turtle.

The screen unfolds the remarkable story of the turtle's selfless travail. She must first find a safe haven on the beach, then, using her clumsy hind flippers, dig a hollow for herself and a deep well to receive the eggs. This done, she drops them agonisingly in endless quantities into the hole, covering them with sand.

Using her last drop of strength she creeps painfully seawards, shedding a visible tear as the waves begin to lap around her.

"There are people who say that it is the wind that makes them cry," the native boy concludes, "but me—me keep thinking it is the sorrow. Two moons pass, and the sand begin move everywhere. Baby turtles show their little heads. Oh, they know the way. They run straight into the sea."

Surely it is the most intimate glimpse of nature ever filmed.





**RACING THROUGH THE SURF** at Palm Beach are sisters Helen (left) and Lorna Graham, who had just driven from the city to spend a day on the beach in the sunshine.



**TRIO (above)** on lawn beside the swimming-pool at the Peter Mullers' Palm Beach home are Mrs. Walter McGrath, jun., Mrs. Muller, and her son, Peter.

## SOCIAL JOTTINGS

**INFORMAL parties at the beach seem to be the choice of Sydney people who like to give the New Year a rousing welcome. Many guests will bring their bathing suits so they can have a quick swim before they drive home for breakfast.**

Palm Beach will be one of the gayest places in Sydney this New Year's Eve, with two large club parties as well as the usual festivities in the homes of summer residents.

More than 500 young guests will wear casual beach clothes to the Pacific Club dance. A barbecue supper will be served under the stars in the garden and on the patio.

And next door, at the Cabbage Tree Club, members and their friends will welcome in the New Year at a cocktail party from 10.30 p.m. to 1.30 a.m.

The Bruce McWilliams will give their popular New Year's Eve party at their home, "Pebbles," in Pacific Road, Palm Beach. This year more than 100 guests will dance to rock-n-roll records till the dawn.

**HOME** for Christmas . . .

Pauline Hammond, of Canterbury, is travelling in Himalaya, which will arrive in Sydney six days before Christmas.

**AN** all-white wedding has been chosen by Elizabeth Beveridge, of Baradine, who will marry John King, of "Pine Grove," Gulargambone, on April 27. John is the younger son of Mrs. L. A. King, of "Inglewood," Ourimbah, and the late Mr. F. J. King, of "Gooyong," Baradine. Elizabeth is wearing a pretty diamond ring . . . she will spend Christmas with her fiancé's mother at Ourimbah.

**NEWLYWEDS** Patricia and Norman Lyall, who were married at the Shore College Chapel, are spending a motor-honeymoon in Tasmania. Patricia is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. George Bennett, of Mosman.

**ATTRACTIVE** Helen Vyden has announced her engagement to Tom Van Hoven . . . Tom is the youngest son of Mrs. A. S. Van Hoven, of Amsterdam, Holland, and the late Mr. *Anne* Van Hoven.



**IN THE POOL** at Palm Beach are young swimmers (from left) Rosanne Fuller, Jill Toohey, and Nicholina Ralston.

**OFF to the beach** are (from left) Philip, Anthony, Patricia, and Diana Thompson. Mr. and Mrs. Philip Thompson's house overlooks Pittwater.



**YOUNG HOSTESSES** (from left) Annette Bingle, of Bilpin, Audrey Codrington, of "Benalabri," Boggabri, Tonia Davis, and (in front) Peta Jaquet, of "Pimpampa," Rowena, and Jan Bell, who, with five other students from Ascham, gave an end-of-term dance for 120 of their friends at Sherbrooke.



**SIGNING THE REGISTER** at St. John's Cathedral, Canberra, are Mr. and Mrs. Terry Wynne. The bride was formerly Maureen Doyle, of Canberra.

# Yachts prepare for

*On Boxing Day, some 20 yachts will hoist their racing sails for the gruelling 600-mile race from Sydney to Hobart.*



● All over Sydney yachtsmen are preparing their yachts for the 12th Sydney-Hobart ocean race, which starts on Boxing Day. During the race yachts keep radio contact with the mother ship, *Lauriana*, where Dick Hooley and John Amos (above) plot their positions on charts.



● Mother-ship *Lauriana* uses both motor and sail. Here Norwegian Ray Raydar and Allan Campbell, of Sydney, hoist the staysail in a heavy wind. *Lauriana* is by far the most comfortable boat in the racing fleet.



● Below decks on *Siandra*, a newcomer to the racing fleet, Cook-navigator Peter Mounsey prepares a meal for Skipper Graham Newland and Tiny Hunter during a recent shakedown cruise. *Siandra* is a new 35ft. sloop.



● Last year steel-hulled *Solo*, owned and skippered by Vic Myers, was favorite for the race but she finished without a place. This year she has been well placed in yacht races held on Sydney Harbor.



● The start: One of the world classics of blue-water yachting gets under way. Sydney Harbor on Boxing Day is a kaleidoscope of yachts, launches, and crowded foreshores. But for the yachtsmen the glamor goes as soon as they get out of the Heads and start slogging their craft down the gusty east-Australian coastline.



● After the storm comes the calm, yachts tie up after the race, there against wind, sail, and sea. Slowly Hobart gets excited about the race.

# gruelling classic



● Last year's winner, Moonbi, is expected to do well again this year. She is skippered by Hal Evans, of Sydney, and won on handicap.



● Sydney yacht Kurrewa IV, biggest yacht in the fleet, used to race under the name of Morna and last year was second across the finishing line. She is owned by two South Australian graziers, Frank and John Livingstone.



● Lahara, a New Britain yacht which has come to Sydney to take part in the race. Her owner, Des Ashton, usually sails her from island to island with a crew of native boys, but for the big race he will be having an Australian crew. He'll need much luck to win.



in Constitution Dock, Hobart, where the peace and quiet after the five-day battle stragglers drift in to tie up at the dock, welcomes the yachtsmen gaily each year.



● This tiny yacht, Samuel Pepys, has been entered by the Royal Naval Sailing Association. She is no newcomer to ocean racing and has won and come second in the Transatlantic Yacht Race. She arrived in Australia from Malta last May. She will be skippered in the Hobart race by Lt.-Cmdr. Donald ("Spike") Ross.



● Navigator of Lauriana, Wal Parr, shoots the sun during last year's race. Color pictures on these pages were taken by Douglass Baglin, of Sydney.

## Continuing . . . The Boy Who Found Santa Claus

from page 5

hurt, and any minute he expected Miss Webster to come after him.

"Prove you're Santy Claus."

Mr. Sears was beginning to wish he never had got into this conversation. He would almost have been glad for the sight of Miss Webster's ample and determined figure coming to take him to the Shelter. How can you prove something that isn't true? Still, there was a glimmer in the Kid's eyes that kept him from terminating the interview. Whatever it was in the Kid's eyes he wanted to encourage it.

"All right," he said wearily. "What would it take to prove it?"

"Well," the Kid said capably, "Santy Claus is supposed to give you something, ain't he? I mean, that's what he's for, ain't it?"

"Yes," Mr. Sears said, almost in a whisper. "That's the story. Now what is it you want for Christmas?"

Suddenly the Kid's eyes blazed. His hatchet face lighted up. He smiled. He looked up reverently at the aeroplane model. He put his hand to his mouth before he spoke, and all the bravado was gone out of him. His small being all but trembled as he said, "I want that."

Mr. Sears' heart sank. He saw himself standing in front of the hardware-store window, so many aeons and aeons ago, looking at roller-skates. They had been only 3.95 dollars.

"Oh, you like planes," he said.

"Yeah," the Kid breathed. "I like 'em better than anything. I'm gonna fly one—some day. When I get big!"

Mr. Sears had an unannounced onset of his dyspepsia. That is, he got a knot in his throat. Once he had been going to make automobiles when he got grown.

"If you're really Santa Claus," the Kid said, "I guess you could give it to me, couldn't you?"

Mr. Sears' head began to swim. Now what was he going to do? The thing to do was to come clean. This Kid was no dummy. He would understand the facts of life. You could tell him, right off, that he had been right at the start. That there isn't any Santa Claus. But it was the look in the Kid's eye that stopped him—that tentative, beginning look of something—what was it?—confidence, faith?

"Well," Mr. Sears said. "I couldn't just hand it to you, you know. It ain't Christmas—not till tomorrow night."

"Oh!" the Kid's face hardened.

"You see the way this works," Mr. Sears hastened on, "is like this. I get out my reindeer and stuff, and I could leave it where you live."

"A-hhh," the Kid spat out, "That old baloney."

"You got to give me a chance to prove it," Mr. Sears said. "You got to give me a chance."

Maybe it was the earnestness of his tired old voice. Who knows what it was? The Kid sidled over to him. He looked quizzically into Mr. Sears' eyes. "On the level?" he said.

"Yeah," Mr. Sears said, his mind already made up. "Where do you live?" He dragged towards him the pad and pencil that had been used for the manifold desires of youth.

"It's 1065 Tenth Avenue," the Kid said, breathing hard. "Fourth floor."

"Tomorrow night then," Mr. Sears said.

The store lights winked three times and half of them dimmed.

The Kid, now almost beside himself, turned to go.

"Hey," Mr. Sears remembered. "Wait a minute. First you got to be a good boy."

"I been good," he said, slewing his eyes away from Santa Claus.

Mr. Sears held out his hand. "Give it here," he said sternly.

"Huh?"

"Empty 'em out."

The Kid blanched and reached into his lumpy pockets. He removed a baseball, a small and wadded-up pitcher's mit, and a red muslin sack of marbles, and laid them in Santa Claus' hand.

"Don't ever do that again," Mr. Sears adjured him sternly. "Don't get you no place. No place at all. You hear me?"

The Kid ducked his head. "Okay," he said. "Will—it will make any difference this time?"

"Nope. Not this time. But don't you forget what I said."

"No, sir," he said, and scurried toward the stairs.

Mr. Sears examined the small pile of pilfered loot. "You got a hell of a nerve," he said to himself.

The lights dimmed again, and he wearily made his way to the employees' elevator and divested himself of his Santa Claus regalia. When he got to

The great pleasure in life is doing what people say you cannot do.

—Walter Bagehot.

the exit Miss Webster was pacing the sidewalk.

"What happened to you?" she asked petulantly. "I was beginning to worry."

"Important customer," Mr. Sears said. "Very important."

When dusk fell on Christmas Eve and the last customer had been propelled out of the building, the Sampson and Cole employees' party was to be held. Mr. Sears was due to make his last appearance as Santa Claus on this occasion. It fitted right into his plans. He was excited as he had not been in years—excited the way he always was before a job.

The day was endless, but eventually it came to a close. The doors were closed, the customers had gone home, and through the store's loud-speaker system the carols began to play. The employees trickled towards the fourth floor, where the cafeteria was.

Mr. Sears stayed behind, moving stealthily around his office, smiling to himself. He peered over the hump of papier-mache to see that they had all gone. Then, moving very softly, he went to the plane, snapped the wire that held it, and stuck the plane in his sack, which had been part of his equipment.

"Joy to the world!" pealed the loudspeaker.

The store was empty, except for the crowded fourth floor. Mr. Sears smiled, sidled along the wall in the semi-darkness to the freight elevator. He got in and stopped it at the second floor (piece goods) and got off in the dark. He moved slowly—his eyes circling the dimness all the time—to a window, opened it expertly, and climbed out on the fire escape over the alley.

He was still wearing his red velvet suit and the whiskers. It

tickled him to think of it. It tickled him to think of Miss Webster, who wouldn't be after him until eight o'clock, when the employees' party broke up. Well, he was giving the old girl the slip, all right. He was through with Miss Webster and her watchdogging!

"Joy to the world!" Mr. Sears murmured in a cracked voice.

It took him almost three hours to work himself to the right block on Tenth Avenue. The slum odors came to him, thick with remembrance. He felt almost like a boy again. He waited a while before he started to climb to the fourth floor. He certainly didn't want to see the Kid. He didn't want to see anybody. He waited until the lights were out in the two-room flat on the fourth floor of the narrow, squalid house.

Then he began to climb. At the top landing he stood still a minute to catch his panting breath, and then tried the door. It was locked, but he had no trouble getting it open. Gently he withdrew the shining bauble from the bag and set it there, inside the room that smelled of stale cabbage and sour beer.

"You old fool," he said to himself.

Mr. Sears' plans had not extended past 1065 Tenth Avenue. He did not know where he was going, especially in this rig. He had to get out of it—get some clothes. It was as bad as convict stripes. Then he thought actively of a saloon—any saloon. But first, clothes.

He needn't have worried. He had walked hardly two blocks when a patrol car rolled up to the kerb and an officer got out; and Mr. Sears, in a very familiar way, was taken into custody. Miss Webster had been right on the job.

When he hadn't put in an appearance after the employees' party, she had gone to the personnel head, and it seemed that Mr. Sears had decamped with the store's property—a red velvet suit, shiny black boots and an expensive wig. So Miss Webster had given the alarm for a vagrant Santa Claus.

Mr. Sears didn't feel so bad as might have been expected. He was tired, and it might be kind of restful in gaol. Besides, it was as much home to him as any place, maybe more so. They usually gave the prisoners turkey at Christmas. In fact, he took it all in his stride, though he knew what it meant. He had broken his parole.

Only he did a strange thing when he was arraigned. He took out sixty dollars, which represented three weeks' salary at Sampson and Cole's, and laid it on the sergeant's blotter. He didn't especially want to—it wasn't his way at all—but he thought about the Tenth Avenue Kid, and he didn't want anything or anyone to take that plane away from him.

"Hrrumph," he said, clearing his throat. "This money belongs to Sampson and Cole. I just bought a plane over there—one of those toy gimcracks."

He was then led away, still wearing his red Santa Claus suit.

The desk sergeant stared after him in stupefaction. "That old devil," he said. "Darned if he doesn't look like Santa Claus—to the letter."

And the sergeant was right. For to his other manifest qualifications, Mr. Sears had added something. There was at last a twinkle in his eye.

(Copyright)

## What's he saying?

● Weekly cash prizes totalling £100 are to be won in our weekly "Dog Talk" Contest. Results of "Dog Talk" No. 1 are announced below.

ALL you have to do is write a bright caption of not more than 15 words, telling what the dog in the picture would be saying if he could talk.

First prize is £50, with three awards of £10 each, three of £5, and five of £1.

Make your entries as bright and descriptive as you can; a saying you would use if you felt like the dog in the picture.

To help you, here are two suggestions:

- "This far and no farther."
- "I'm the boss here."

Because of heavy Christmas mails and delays over the holiday season, post your entries early, as they will take longer than usual to reach us.

Supporters of our previous "Baby Talk" Contest lost no time in getting back into their stride. The judges recognised many names on the entries for "Dog Talk" No. 1.

Lots of readers added little notes to their entries saying how happy they and their families felt at having another "Talk" contest to look forward to each week.

There will be another dog picture and another £100 prize-money to be won in our "Dog Talk" Contest next week.

### ENTRY COUPON

The Australian Women's Weekly  
"Dog Talk" Contest  
No. 4, December 26,  
1956.



"Dog Talk" No. 4

### How to enter

1. Write a caption of not more than 15 words for the picture on this page. You may send as many entries as you like.
2. Each group of entries from the same competitor must be accompanied by the entry coupon on this page.
3. Write clearly, addressing entries to "Dog Talk," Box 5252, G.P.O., Sydney.
4. Entries for "Dog Talk" Contest No. 4 will close on DECEMBER 31. Winners will be announced in our JANUARY 16 issue.
5. The decision of the judges will be final. No entries can be returned or any correspondence entered into.
6. Employees of Consolidated Press Ltd. and its associated companies and their families are not eligible to enter this contest.

## "Dog Talk" results

● First prize of £50 in "Dog Talk" Contest No. 1 has been won by P. Kelso, 15 Mandalong Rd., Mosman, N.S.W.

MR. KELSO'S original and amusing entry, placing the Sydney Silky as a political canvasser, said:

"He's a local dog, good mixer, gets around, and deserves your No. 1 vote."

Prizes of £10 were awarded to:

Mrs. M. Overton, Somerville, Vic.

"I thought you said I was one of the family."

Miss Kath Connell, 134 Raglan St., Mosman, N.S.W.

"Got any rags or old bones?"

D. H. Dowling, Box 44, G.P.O., Sydney.

"I hear your dog is sub-letting his kennel during the Christmas vacation."

Prizes of £5 were awarded to:

Miss Lucy Flood, 1 View St., Hobart.

"I left my umbrella."

Mrs. G. Isbister, 34 Denbeigh St., Cairns, Qld.

"Dear! I CAUGHT the last tram, but it was running late."

Mrs. M. Donohoe, Jersey Ave., Kilburn, S.A.

"Well, for Pete's sake! No admittance without collar and tie!"

Prizes of £1 were awarded to:

Mrs. David B. Bruce, Box 56, P.O., Kingscote, Kangaroo Island, S.A.

"But, gosh, honey, it was only a DUTY dance!"

Mrs. H. I. Luscombe, 45 Gordon St., Northam, W.A.

"Is this No. 10 Downing Street?"

Mrs. R. Gallagher, Grant Cres., Griffith, Canberra, A.C.T.

"And I'll say, 'Mother, I've left him for good this time!'"

Mrs. E. Gorman, 116 Park Rd., Kalinga, Qld.

"I know they're home, because I saw the curtains move!"

Mrs. M. A. Hunt, 27 King George Ave., Brighton Park, S.A.

"Now, let me see; did I remember to turn off the gas?"

Wonderful Australia sold out

● Just as this issue was going to press we learned that our "Wonderful Australia" book, because of a sudden heavy demand, was sold out. For technical reasons we were unable to remove the coupon which appears in this issue. We regret, however, that we will be unable to fulfil a any further orders.



"He's a local dog, good mixer, gets around, and deserves your No. 1 vote."

# FASHION WORLD AT MY FEET



JEAN DAWNAY

● After months of struggle to make a name in the model world, Jean Dawnay has achieved every girl's ambition—a Dior contract. In this issue she continues her story of a girl, not even pretty by beauty standards, who became one of the most photographed faces in Paris and London and who has travelled the world, including Australia, as a leading English model, showing the clothes of famous designers.

I LEFT London in a burst of publicity to join the group of models Christian Dior had engaged in Paris to show his January collection.

The first morning I arrived feeling extremely nervous, rather like the first day at a new school, and I used the front entrance by mistake, not knowing that there was a special side entrance for employees.

I was taken to the mannequins' dressing-room, and was given a white overall to wear and shown where I was to sit, with a mirror and a little desk in which to keep my make-up and personal belongings. One of the models, Jane Burns, an American, helped me a lot with the language difficulty.

I was surprised when I was shown where the mannequins had to "clock-in" in the morning, just like all the other employees at Dior. If you arrived after 9 a.m. it was marked in red and meant deductions from your pay.

At last the wheels began to turn. The mannequins were asked to go up to M. Dior's studio, where we walked up and down in our overalls, while he decided which of his dresses should be worn by which mannequin.

I was measured as carefully as if I were a gold bar being put into the Bank of England. I also became "Caroline"—M. Dior chose this name for me to avoid confusion with the American girl Jane Burns, Jean and Jane both being the same in French.

As it was my first collec-

tion, I was very lucky to be wearing more than 20 numbers. The average collection is made up of about 200 different outfits, shown by about 14 mannequins.

At night I always returned to my hotel dead-beat, with feet burning and head aching, too tired to eat anything.

Later I was to meet Claude Terail, owner of the famous "Tour D'Argent" restaurant, who used to send his enormous Rolls to collect me at Dior and we dined together at 1 a.m. It was an ideal ar-

## "The Model Life" by JEAN DAWNAY. PART 2

angement, as he had to dine late after all the restaurant guests had left.

Claude used to have lots of amusing people there for those late dinners, including, on one occasion, Orson Welles. Unfortunately that particular night I was feeling completely worn out, and was wearing an even more worn-out jumper and skirt.

For a long time I had had a burning crush on Mr. Welles, but to my everlasting disappointment he was more interested in his steak than in me.

Finally, after weeks and weeks of fittings, with tension and nerves mounting to breaking point, the collection was ready to go on show.

The night before the big Press opening I kept my fingers crossed that I would be able to get away early to get sufficient beauty sleep, but my luck was out.

At about midnight, M. Dior became inspired to create a completely new dress out of some glorious white organdie with scalloped embroidery on it. He had it cut and fitted on me there and then.

I was kept until 2 a.m., nearly in tears with tiredness and knowing I would look like an old hag at the all-important morning show. On top of it all, he said I must be there at nine in the morning for a fitting. This last-minute white dress was one of the best sellers in the collection.

In the morning I was so keyed up that I could not eat any breakfast, but just drank some black coffee.

At 11 o'clock we started, and the talk in the salon dropped to a breathless hush. As I passed through the grey satin curtains into the salon to show my first number, a caramel-colored fitted coat in grosgrain, I could feel the atmosphere of intense concentration like a tangible thing.

There was little room to turn and show properly, and when it came to the wider ball dresses with their yards and yards of tulle or heavy satin all sparkling with hand embroidery, we could hardly pass between the closely packed audience. The dresses dragged against programmes and knocked ashtrays flying.

In the dressing-room there was even less room to move, and changing quickly was a nightmare, as it was full of tailors, hairdressers, dress-makers, mannequins, and dressers.

It was a wonder anyone ever got ready, but M. Dior himself checked each one of us to see that every detail was correct before we went on.

At last we came to the wedding-dress, which was the final number, and the Press was enthusiastic, clapping and cheering and surging forward to congratulate M. Dior.

Even before going out to acknowledge the applause, M. Dior came and thanked us for all our hard work. Now that it was all over, I felt flat and empty. I couldn't find anywhere to sit in the madhouse of a dressing-room, so I crawled behind the dresses in the long cupboard and sat down and cried and cried from sheer nervous exhaustion.

After the first parade, or premiere, which is shown to about 30 carefully screened Press writers, we modelled for the buyers who came from



POSING FOR A PHOTOGRAPH is by no means as easy as it looks, says Jean Dawnay. The best method is for a photographer to let a model take her own pose. Jean has done so here to show an attractive girl in a smart white jumper striped in black.

large and small stores from all over the world.

These buyers pay large sums to see the different collections as an advance payment on what they buy. If they don't buy anything, they forfeit the payment.

If they try to sketch some of the clothes during the collection (I saw it happen to one buyer while I was there) they are accused of piracy; and the punishment for this offence is no less than prison.

The first two weeks after the opening, Maison Dior was in chaos, swarming with customers, buyers, journalists, model girls, photographers, artists . . . all clamoring for dresses, suits, coats, furs, and so on, to be looked at, tried on, photographed, or sketched.

The vendeuses barricade the staircases, looking like ravens waiting for their prey in their black dresses. Everyone has to work flat out.

One event I'll always remember at Dior was the special evening show for the noblesse. This was a very grand and formal occasion, with the women wearing full

evening dress, long white gloves, and tiaras; the men in evening clothes, and wearing decorations. All the famous families of France were represented.

Banks of flowers filled every available corner of the salon. The audience sat on the small gold chairs, precious heirlooms glittered through cigar smoke, champagne flowed like a cloudburst, and the salon looked like a hothouse of rare and beautiful plants.

## Show for noblesse

I had not been working at Dior very long when a French newspaper ran a story about me, a completely fanciful tale, saying I was living with an old woman in Paris who was very strict with me and would not allow me to go out and enjoy myself in the evenings.

The whole thing was ridiculous, and it made me sound rather pathetic and lonely. I don't know whether it was the story or my picture with the article that appealed to what seemed like half the male population in Paris, but the

next day the Dior telephone operators were inundated with calls from men anxious to offer me hospitality.

As my French at that time was well below even the normal school standard, answering these offers became difficult.

People always remark on the fantastic prices of Dior clothes, but I think they are genuinely worth the money—if you've got it.

At each collection the mannequins were allowed to choose one outfit as a present. I chose a grey worsted dress and jacket, and I used to go through agonies when I saw some fat customer trying to force herself into it, wondering whether I would ever get it in one piece at the end of six months.

Surprising though it may seem, not only did I get it in one piece, but it is still one of the mainstays of my wardrobe.

After I had been working in Paris for about four months Dior was asked to take his



CHRISTIAN DIOR, who chose the name of Caroline for Jean when she worked for him to avoid confusion with an American model named Jane Burns. In the bustle of work at Dior's salon, Jean lost more than a stone in weight.

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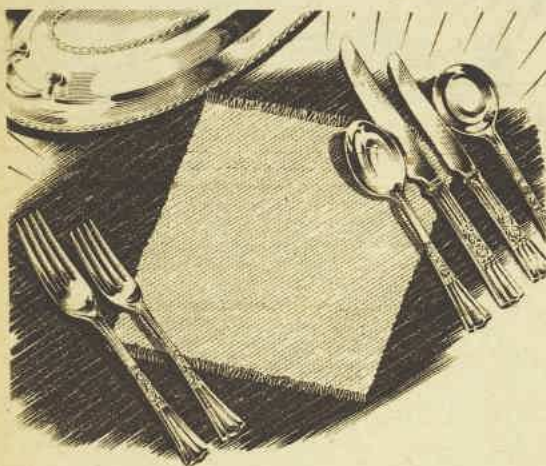
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## THE JEAN DAWNAY STORY

from page 35

collection and mannequins to London. Only eight out of the fourteen girls were to go. I was thrilled when I learnt that I was to be one of the lucky ones.

A new collection, an exact copy of the French collection but in English materials, was made for the occasion.

After showing the collection at the Savoy Hotel in London, we were asked to a big dinner-party. The man on my right was a maharajah who was extremely attentive and asked me if I had ever been to India.

When I said I had not, he invited me to visit his State as his guest. I refused, where upon he tempted me with leopard skins, jewels, and even, in desperation, marriage. I would have been one of several, however, as I had been told by someone else at the table that he had a very beautiful wife already.

### Queen pleased

THE day after the Savoy show we were driven in great secrecy to the French Embassy, where we presented the collection again to the Queen Mother (then the Queen) and Princess Margaret. They drove from Windsor to see it and sat enthralled throughout.

It was after this show that M. Dior came up to me.

"I hear you are leaving us at the end of the season," he said. "Can't we persuade you to stay? You look so lovely in my clothes."

I was enormously flattered at the compliment, but I had already decided that two seasons at Dior would kill me. In those weeks of fittings, followed by months of showing, I had lost more than a stone in weight.

I had intended to take things quietly when I returned to London, but that idea was soon dispelled. Fresh from a season with Dior, I was much in demand for shows at every fashion house, all of whom tried to pick my brains about the cutting and fitting at Dior. I wasn't much help.

### At the top

I SUPPOSE all established models have their moments of glory when they are the rage and wanted by every photographer and dress-designer. This period was definitely mine. I was having more publicity than was good for me. Even the local butcher had a picture of me stuck up beside the carcasses.

The uncrowned queen of the models then, and the centre of a whirl of publicity, was Barbara Goalen.

I always felt a great bond with her, as she was the only model who used to get as nervous as I did before a show.

It was by no means plain sailing for Barbara to arrive at her exalted position. There were difficulties to be overcome, such as her aristocratic nose which cast bad shadows in photographs and had to be made more photogenic by plastic surgery.

As it turned out, it was a wonderful investment. Her incredibly slender bones, long graceful hands, and superbly elegant way of posing made

her a leading model. Since her retirement many models have tried to take her place, but nobody has quite achieved it.

The most beautiful of all models I have known is Fiona Campbell-Walter, now the Baroness Thyssen.

Fiona is as striking and perfect a beauty as it is possible for a girl to be. She has everything; a beautiful patrician face, lovely dark red hair, a glorious figure, and to crown it all a wonderful personality, fiery and spirited, with a terrific zest for life.

Strange as it may seem, with all their opportunities for buying things and improving their taste, few models are really elegant. Among the few exceptions are Marla Scarafia, Nola Rose (a Sydney girl who quickly became a top model), and Helen Connor.

A lot of people wonder how models feel wearing such beautiful clothes for shows and photographs without being able to buy them. As we are working with beautiful clothes all the time, we are

drawing-room, looking just as she is always described—radiant (it really is the perfect word for her). Her clear skin, blue eyes, and incredibly sweet warm smile make a lasting impression on anyone who has been lucky enough to see it.

As she walked along the line with Princess Margaret at her side, looking equally fresh and lovely, she paused in front of me to speak. I sank in a curtsy, dutifully lowering my eyes. When I lifted them to hers she was asking me about the material of the red coat, but in her eyes I could swear there was a gleam of curiosity as she looked at my lashes, which were in long and stuck on with glue.

Being a Queen, she couldn't very well ask, "Are those lashes real?" But, being a woman, I am sure she was dying to know.

I was getting restless to return to Paris once more, this time not to show in the collections but just to do photography.

On this occasion I noticed there were many more English girls trying their luck

previous visit to Paris when I was booked by "Harper's." When Mrs. Snow arrived for the sitting with the photographer, I was filled with awe at the sight of her mauve hair, wizened face, and Balenciaga suit.

She was my first contact with a high-powered American woman, but like most people who are terrifying at first sight she turned out to be charming and full of rather dry Irish wit.

Posing for photographs is by no means as easy as it looks. A good fashion photograph is a combination of many things, and therefore there are at least half a dozen ways in which it can go wrong.

Photographers use two methods of working with models. Some describe the precise pose that they want down to the last little finger, telling you to "face this way," "put your left leg out," "do something with your right hand," "throw your bust out" (nowadays it's "draw it in," but no doubt it will soon be out again) and so on and so on while you get stiffer and stiffer.

The other method, which is far simpler, is to let you take your own pose. Then you can "feel" the flow and movement of the dress and react naturally to it.

Unless the clothes are couture or made on you for the photographers, they are usually too large, and they have to be pegged and pinned in at the back.

### Box in belt

PHOTOGRAPHERS always have a supply of clips or clothes-pegs, and sometimes ominous-looking hatpins. Sometimes it's sufficient just to stick a box in the back of one's belt to slim the garment down and make it look more elegant.

I sometimes wonder whether the public would ever buy anything they saw advertised if they had a chance to see the mechanics of fashion photography. Those pencil-slim skirts, for example, are always pinned in behind the knees.

The reason the clothes are always so much too big is that models have to be much slimmer than the average woman, otherwise they would look enormous in pictures, because photography enlarges.

A model's expression is all-important in a fashion photograph and I have always had the disadvantage of having very bad eyesight, so that my expression is inclined to look hard. It's all right in outdoor shots, but, as soon as I'm in the studio under the lights, the blaze hurts my eyes, and my pupils become dilated, giving me a rather grim look.

The inane expression on a model's face is sometimes terribly irritating, particularly that open-mouthed one which was a favorite of every model for far, far too long.

I now heard through my agent that I had been booked for the Vogue Export Book trip to Australia, by Rosemary Cooper, and I returned from Paris excited at the prospect.

**NEXT WEEK: Happy days "down-under."**



ONCE ESTABLISHED as a Dior model, Jean Dawnay was asked to show all the newest London fashions, like this small white hat with the scarf attached to the back brim.

naturally not as starved for them as a lot of women are.

Anyway, if you've been doing a show for some time you are tired of most of the clothes and have learnt their different drawbacks.

There is almost no age limit to modelling. Some are at their best at twenty, others at thirty, and still others at forty. After that, unless they want to become matron models, for which there is quite a demand, they usually give up.

There have been many Royal fashion shows, but a particularly important annual Royal event in the fashion world is when a few clothes from each of the twelve couture houses are shown to the ladies of the Royal Family. The show that year was held at Lady (Kenneth) Clark's lovely house in Hampstead.

Dolores, the famous model who was with Norman Hartnell, the Royal dressmaker, for nineteen years, and who is now training mannequins in South Africa, had a busy time showing us how to curtsy, having had more experience than most of us of modelling before Royalty. "Left foot behind right, then down, keeping your eyes downcast, back straight, no wobbles or grins, please."

The Queen, now the Queen Mother, came out from the

Obviously they'd taken one look at me when I was in England and thought: "If she can do it, I certainly can!"

One of the first things I did was to visit Dior and say "hullo" to everyone. I was welcomed like a long-lost daughter, and they all wanted to know when I was coming back to work there again. It gave me a wonderful feeling to hear them say that they had missed me.

I was tremendously touched when I was told that after I left Dior had interviewed dozens of mannequins to replace me, but had said: "Nobody can ever replace 'ma petite Caroline.'"

### Many bookings

I RANG up or visited all the photographers and fashion magazines to let them know I was back, and soon I was doing photographs morning, noon, and night.

At collection times, all the leading American magazines send their fashion editors to Paris, with photographers and various staff. They bring an air of elegant, streamlined efficiency with them, no one more so than the editorial chief of "Harper's Bazaar," Mrs. Carmel Snow, who is always given a place of honor at dress shows.

I had first met her on my

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people who always got out of that bus at that hour at that place. The man who always carried a bag of fruit carried his bag of fruit. The woman who always wore a red hat wore her red hat. Nothing in the world was changed—outside.

Was it necessary that everything should be changed within?

"All right," said Henry reasonably. "You had a man here. And you could rely on my being late; it's the classic situation. Do I need to know who he is?"

Behind his back Catherine didn't move.

"Don't you want to know?" she said.

"I'm not sure," said Henry reasonably. "If it's serious, of course, I must. Otherwise perhaps the less I know the better—for instance, if it's anyone I do business with."

"It would be less brutal if you hit me," said Catherine.

To his annoyance she began to cry. Now that he was getting used to the idea, Henry himself found the situation less tragic than it should have been. In fact, it wasn't tragic at all. Their playing fair with each other had become too much like play-acting, their marriage too hollow a thing altogether, to shed tears about.

Even the academic knowledge that his wife was seeing another man behind his back didn't particularly distress Henry; it seemed chiefly unlikely. He didn't feel jealous, only surprised.

He turned and looked at his wife carefully. It was a long time since he'd regarded her with such attention. Now he noted in detail smooth blond hair, soft skin, delicate profile. At thirty-five Catherine Chevron's prettiness was still girlish.

Even reddened with weeping her eyes were pretty. Henry Chevron found himself unmoved. He might have been looking at a stranger, the bestowal of whose prettiness on another man than himself naturally didn't affect him because he felt no proprietary rights.

Evidently their marriage had been over far longer than he'd known.

"Do you want to leave me?" he asked Catherine.

To his surprise, she flinched. (What had she said about being brutal? No husband alive, Henry assured himself, could be behaving with less brutality.) However, she answered him sensibly enough.

"No. Not just for an affair. That's all it is. Of course, if you want to—"

"Not at all," said Henry, with relief. "I can't think of a greater nuisance. I've a year's hard work ahead of me, and we're perfectly comfortable."

"Thank you," said Catherine. "Don't you want me to promise anything?"

"Just don't make me look a fool. I shan't come home unexpectedly, and I shan't ask questions."

"It's Simon Richards," said Catherine.

The situation was no longer academic. In one instant everything was changed again. The fact that he'd been deceived, so calmly accepted (in an academic spirit) by Henry Chevron, was no longer a merely academic fact. The anonymous figure of the other man had taken on name and face.

Henry didn't have to think as long as he had before identifying Mrs. Whyte, but he still had to think a moment. It must have been at least a year earlier that he'd brought Simon Richards home for cocktails; it was fully six months since his work for Richards Hotels had ended—a commission made unexpectedly disagreeable by the manners and personality of their proprietor.

Unlike most big men, Simon Richards was a bully, a loud-

Continuing . . .

mouthed believer in keeping his employees on their toes, up to the mark, in fear and trembling. He couldn't bully Henry Chevron, Henry being as much at the top of his own tree as Simon Richards was at the top of his.

He hadn't been able to bully Henry Chevron, but now he'd taken away Henry's wife.

"That oath!" shouted Henry. He was trembling with rage, choking with disgust; if he'd moved one step toward his wife he would have struck her. "That sadistic baboon!"

"I know you never liked him," Catherine said.

Insanely, since it was the worst thing he could do if he wished to keep his control, Henry allowed his thoughts to dwell on Simon Richards' person. Women of naturally coarse taste no doubt found him attractive; he stood six foot three in his socks, and his great powerful head, blue-jowled, was thatched with curly black hair.

Henry Chevron looked suddenly at his wife's hands. Catherine had pretty hands, small and slender. The thought of her running them through those tight black curls nauseated him.

"Your taste is coarser than I realised," said Henry. "Or did he give you diamonds? Have we anything valuable cached away?"



"He never gave me anything," said Catherine. "He was lonely, and I was sorry for him."

"Don't strain my credulity too far," said Henry. "Not even a garnet?" he mocked. "Just tears of loneliness on those pretty little hands?"

"I have tried to keep them nice," said Catherine. The irrelevance of women! "I didn't think you noticed."

"And you still don't want to leave me?" mocked Henry. "He's not married, is he?"

"I've told you," said Catherine, "that it's just an affair. But he is fond of me in his way, and I've grown fond of him. You said you wouldn't ask any questions."

"And I shan't," agreed Henry.

At last he moved, violently—but not toward his wife, toward the bedroom.

"I'm leaving you," he said.

Where now was his placid acceptance of a not uncommon, indeed a classic, situation? He plunged into the bedroom, pulled a suitcase from the top shelf of the closet, and began thrusting in shirts. "See him here as often as you like," he called, "but it won't be under my roof! Call him up now to say the coast's clear! I'm leaving."

Catherine came running to the door; it gratified him to see that she looked frightened. "But you can't, you mustn't!" cried Catherine.

"Why not?" demanded Henry. As she laid a hand on the suitcase, he took her roughly by the wrist. "Why not? What's to stop me?"

"Scotland Yard," she said.

It was almost incredible; for the preceding half hour Henry

## Unnecessary Alibi

from page 7

had completely forgotten Scotland Yard. He'd forgotten his status as number one suspect in a potential murder case.

Catherine sat down on one of the beds. She still looked frightened, but she was evidently making a strong effort to keep fear out of her voice—to speak (now that her warning had got through to him) calmly and reasonably. Her voice scarcely shook at all, only her hands.

"That policeman practically warned you, Henry, not to go away anywhere. Asking you to tell Scotland Yard first was probably just formula. Besides, what could look worse? I still don't see how they can possibly suspect you; you had no motive. But if you rush away now, what could look worse?"

Henry sat down opposite her. (He and Catherine had slept in twin beds for four or five years now, the refurbishing of the bedroom, some four or five years earlier, neatly covering their indifference to each other.) He knew that what Catherine said made sense; it also offered him a weapon to wound her with.

"I imagine they wouldn't be suspecting me at all," said

It was obviously the right thing to do. Catherine's plan was obviously and eminently sensible. What astonished Henry Chevron now was his own reluctance to adopt it.

He found he didn't want to take the tale of his wife's deception to Scotland Yard, for no other reason than that she was his wife. The dragging in of Simon Richards, distasteful in itself, was doubly distasteful because it would expose Catherine as such a pathetic fool. (As she must in her heart know she was.) What a fool she had been! Possibly he, Henry Chevron, was a fool, too, but the instinct to protect his wife persisted.

"I'll stay here for tonight," said Henry. "Don't argue."

Catherine opened her mouth to speak, closed it, then opened it again.

"You've had no dinner," she said. "You must be hungry."

He was hungry. He hadn't until that moment realised it, but he was famished. It was only half past seven, but the emotions of the last hour had been punishing.

They ate upstairs in the kitchenette; neither of them could face the restaurant. (Catherine had been crying too much; Henry was too tired.) There were also 12 fresh eggs, more than enough to make an omelet for both of them.

Catherine went about the business of mixing it with great seriousness. She had a little bottle of dried herbs that Henry remembered. It could hardly be the same bottle, but it was the same sort—the sort his tooth powder came in—that Catherine, in the early years of their marriage, had always seized upon as soon as empty to scald out and refill with herbs or peppercorns or ground almonds. It was a very familiar bottle.

Henry sat down to watch his wife cook for him. He would probably leave in the morning, but in the meantime he sat and watched her.

How did it happen? he wanted to ask—out of purely intellectual curiosity. How did it happen that for the past five years he'd had nothing to say to each other? I know I've been busy, but how the deuce did it happen?

He naturally didn't utter the words aloud, since he was probably leaving in the morning, but as they crossed his mind, it disconcerted him to see Catherine suspend the beating of her omelet. It appeared that she could still read his thoughts, just like a wife.

"It's not your fault," said Catherine. "I don't even know that it was mine. It just happened when you got so busy. The butter is in the refrigerator. Will you take it out?"

They ate in silence. When they'd finished Henry, automatically turned on the radio; a sugary version of "The Blue Danube" flowed lusciously forth. Catherine listened a moment, then switched it off. "I don't want to cry any more," she said.

"I'll help you with the dishes," Henry said.

"If you won't go to Scotland Yard in the morning, I shall," said Catherine. "No, thank you, Henry; rather do them by myself."

How could the night pass except uneasily? Henry made up a bed on the living-room sofa; Catherine brought in blankets for him. Physically he was comfortable enough, but he couldn't sleep. He lay and worried about Catherine, his wife.

For he couldn't see what was to become of her. She herself was evidently under no illusion as to the consequences of what she meant to do. Simon Richards wouldn't forgive the publication of their affair—and to the police!—any more than he, Henry, had forgiven her betrayal of her marriage vows;

out of loyalty to a husband already lost, Catherine was about to lose her lover as well. And she wasn't a woman able to stand alone; her need of masculine support was Victorian—also one of the reasons why Henry Chevron had loved and married her.

About midnight it struck him that Catherine too was probably lying awake, as much in need of comfort as himself.

About one in the morning he acknowledged that it wasn't because he might be arrested that he, Henry Chevron, needed comfort, but because his marriage to Catherine, for whom he still needed to take thought, had finally come to an end.

For all his success in his chosen profession, he still needed someone to take thought for, someone who depended on him. Like Catherine, he couldn't stand alone. Their needs were different but complementary.

At about two Henry got up and went quietly to the bedroom door and quietly opened it. He wasn't, he assured himself, seeking comfort in his own distress; he simply wanted to see whether Catherine, awake, required comfort from him.

He opened the door as quietly as possible, so that if she was sleeping he wouldn't wake her. But his precautions turned out to be unnecessary; there Catherine stood, just on the other side of the door.

"Can't you sleep either, my darling?"

Which one of them spoke? About the case of old Mrs. Parkin, beaten and robbed, little

more was ever reported. Upon regaining her wits she cleared Henry Chevron almost casually—it was after a man came wanting to buy eggs, related Mrs. Parkin, that she'd been annoyed again by a man who wanted to sell her a broom. They were such wonderful cheap brooms, however, that in the end she had decided to take one—and remembered no more after opening her handbag, which had contained four pounds nine shillings and a penny.

It was "their" policeman who brought the Chevrons this good news, while they still sat at breakfast the following morning. They pressed coffee upon him and the last of the fresh eggs; he thanked them but refused kindly.

He was, in fact, quite unprofessionally happy to relieve so united a couple from anxiety. The atmosphere in the Chevron kitchen reminded him of his own cosy breakfasts at home. He didn't in his heart blame Mrs. Chevron at all for lying to him. He was convinced that she had seen the paragraph in the newspaper, but he didn't blame her at all for the unnecessary lie she'd told to alibi her husband.

The truth was of course more complex. Catherine had lied to alibi herself. Yet out of this imbroglio—the passing danger to Henry bringing to light the constant threat to their marriage—had come the rediscovery of themselves as husband and wife. Henry had, in truth, been driving home.

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are land and money — hard cash."

Therese had been too mean to install a telephone, so there was no way of letting her know that Sam wasn't coming home to dinner.

"It's all very well," said Sam later that evening, "to tell me to take a strong line with her, but what with? She's got me cold. Her uncle, the speculative builder, is a crook, and I won't agree to any of his propositions. Therese's reply to that is to say she will block any effort of mine to realise any part of my capital. Half of it's hers and she's going to camp there until hell freezes over."

Poor Sam was in a bad spot. It was somewhere between eleven and midnight when I dropped him at his gate. He was quite sober, too. But from the way Therese carried on, he might have been out all night with the chorus of the Follies Bergere.

Her shrill voice battered on my ears until three o'clock in the morning. How Sam could stand it was more than I could understand. He called on me a couple of days later and seemed to drink in the peace of the Mas des Violettes.

"It's the most wonderful spot I know in the entire world," he said with real feeling. "I don't blame you for not wanting to sell. But even if you were willing," he added sadly, "I couldn't buy now. Just between ourselves, Bill," he went on, "I've had about as much as I can take. I suppose you haven't got a hundred bucks you can spare? Because if you have, there's a freighter leaving Marseilles tomorrow for Boston, and I'm sailing in her. I've got to, Bill, or she'll drive me nuts."

I lent Sam the money he needed and early the following morning drove him down to catch the Marseilles train. We shook hands, wished each other luck, and that was that.

Fifteen minutes after I returned home Alphonsine announced that Therese was at the front gate and was demanding to see me. It was a massive iron gate with sharp spikes on the top.

"Tell her to go away," I said. "I don't want to see her now or at any other time."

Therese went on rattling the gate until I threatened to send for the police to have her removed. I didn't admit it to myself, but I see now that I was scared of Therese. I wanted nothing to do with her.

This all occurred at the turn of 1938 and 1939. Eight years were destined to pass before I saw either the Mas des Violettes or Therese again. Neither occupied my thoughts during the intervening war years. The Mas des Violettes, since I could not foresee a time when I would be able to live there, was by way of being a white elephant.

A Swiss friend was able to pay Alphonsine a little money during the war, but she and Therese maintained their enmity undiminished. Therese, because she was the type, collaborated first with the Italians and then with the Germans, and when an American detachment marched up the hill in the summer of 1944 to use the house as an observation

Continuing . . .

point, there was an American flag draped over the front gate. I don't doubt that somewhere in the house, just in case of accidents, there was a red flag.

I came back to look at my property in early 1947. Although I dreaded telling Alphonsine, I was now determined to sell the place.

I learned from Alphonsine that Therese's uncle, the speculative builder, was staying with her and that the land had been subdivided, preparatory to selling building lots. It was planned to erect eighty-odd houses there. Therese had applied to the courts for leave to presume Sam's death.

One evening about ten o'clock, when I had been at the Mas des Violettes about a week, there came across the still night air a tremendous uproar in which Therese's calliope soprano was the dominant sound. Dogs barked. Two men were shouting angrily at each other and there was much banging of doors.

A man's voice in a mixture of French and English was telling Therese a few home truths about herself which, alas, are too indelicate to be repeated here. There was, too, something familiar about the voice.

Some fifteen minutes later there came a ring at my gate. Switching on the outside light, I saw standing there a shabby-looking caricature of Sam. The man was roughly the same height and build. He had not shaved for a couple of days. He was carrying a raincoat and a cheap fibre suitcase.

"Hello, Bill," he said warmly. "Nice to see you. Can you put me up for the night? Therese has just shown me the door and sicked the dogs on to me. She says I'm dead."

"Come in," I said tactlessly, opening the gate. "You look as if a square meal wouldn't do you any harm."

Ten minutes later, Sam — and I want to emphasize here that at this juncture I had no doubt about his identity — was sitting down to an omelet, some cold meat and salad, washed down with a carafe of good red wine.

"Let's talk in the morning," I suggested, hustling him off to bed.

Before Sam awoke in the morning, Therese was at the front gate demanding to see me.

"What do you want?" I asked through the bars.

"A man came to my house last night and said that he was Sam," she said, sheets of greenish-blue flame crackling from her eyes.

I said nothing. "Then he came here," she continued. "I saw him when you switched on the light. What did the man tell you?"

"Sam told me that you had turned him out of his house and had set the dogs on him," I replied.

"It is my house," she snarled. "The man was not Sam. Do you think that I would not know my own husband?"

"Please make less noise," I asked her. "Sam is trying to sleep. But when he wakes I shall take him to a good lawyer who will stop you and your uncle from stealing his property."

Therese hit the roof. I hope that some of the things she called me were not true. Then she demanded to see Sam. "You say Sam is dead," I reminded her, "so how can you see him?"

In her rage she reminded me of a caged gorilla rattling the bars. Then, awakened by the roar, Sam came down, wearing one of my bathrobes.

"Hello, Therese," he said

# Marriage Was Her Racket

[from page 17]

amiably. "Just as beautiful and as sweet-tempered as ever, I see. What do you want?" he added less amiably.

"I want to talk with you."

"It's too late," replied Sam. "I wanted to talk to you last night, but what did you do? You set the dogs on me — you and that fat thief of an uncle of yours. You can't talk to me any more. You'll have to talk to the judge. Half of that property is mine and I want it."

If Therese had had a deadly weapon in her hand, I am convinced that she would have used it, first on Sam and then on me. She danced with rage. We left her and went into breakfast.

Alphonsine arrived with coffee and rolls. "If it isn't too much trouble," said Sam, "I wonder if I could have tea. Coffee never has agreed with me."

It was at this point that suspicion first entered my mind. Hitherto it had not occurred to me to doubt that this was Sam. But now I began to wonder, because Sam — and I remembered this clearly — had been a heavy coffee drinker. I said nothing, but from that moment onward I was on my guard.

Alphonsine accepted him without question. "The poor

agreed, hustling Sam out of the office.

"If you had any doubts, Bill," said Sam, when we were in the street, "why in blazes didn't you say so before?"

"It didn't occur to me, Sam," I replied, "that you were counting on me for identification. I'm just not prepared to go on oath as to your identity — although I'm almost sure. Frankly, Sam, I don't think you should put me in this position. But," I added, "if you are prepared to submit to some kind of cross-examination from me, and if you can set all my doubts at rest, I'll be only too glad to go into court and swear that you are the Sam Bolton I knew and who married Therese."

He looked crestfallen at this, but agreed to submit to my questions.

"You know, Sam," I said on the drive home, "you shouldn't need my identification. Why not get a handwriting expert to compare your signature with that on your marriage contract and on the deeds of your house?"

"I injured my right hand some years ago," replied Sam, "and I now write with my left hand."

"Then why not have one of your family come over to swear to your identity?"

"I quarrelled with them all—

Now, this could have been true, but I expected him to tell me that she had been hanging away at the keys of a cash register. That would have been my reply. But Sam had been in love with her and, therefore, more likely to remember those lean, serpentine hips than the cash register.

This left me with the choice of believing that Sam — if he was Sam — had told me the simple truth or that his reply had been diabolically clever by presenting me with a substitute for the truth, but a substitute which did not conflict with the truth. Either way it was inconclusive.

I was preparing a list of written trick questions for him when a telegram recalled me to London. My parting promise to him was that if he could convince me I would come down specially to testify for him.

The written answers arrived in London two days after I did. They left me as undecided as ever. While I did not see how it was possible for anyone but Sam Bolton to have replied to some of them so accurately, it was equally incomprehensible to see how Sam, if he was Sam, could possibly fail to know the answers to others. My curiously undivided frame of mind is reflected in my letter to him:

Dear Sam (if you are Sam): I think it only fair to warn you that if you call me to testify as to your identity, my evidence may do you more harm than good. I am prepared to go the whole way just short of positive identification.

The upshot of this was that I was asked to appear, from which I concluded that if I was his star witness he must have a weak case.

Two months later I was called. Examined by Sam's lawyer, I went as far as I decently could. Much as I disliked Therese I was not prepared to perjure myself in order to upset her scheme.

Her lawyer took a most telling line in cross-examination. "You say, monsieur, that you are almost sure," he asked, "that the plaintiff is the Monsieur Sam Bolton whom you knew years ago?"

"I do."

"The complete certainty of Madame Bolton that this man is an impostor does not shake you, monsieur?"

"Not in the least," I replied. "I believe that Madame Bolton would testify what it was to her advantage to testify, regardless of the truth. Her certainty, therefore, does not impress me."

The court — and rightly — reprimanded me for that. "You admit, do you not, monsieur," asked the lawyer, pressing home his advantage, "that you are prejudiced against Madame Bolton?"

"Very much so," I replied, "but not to the degree that would make me swear falsely."

Then Sam's lawyer asked permission to put one more question to me. "It has become fashionable in recent years," he said, "to express many things, including degrees of certainty, in terms of percentages. Would you be so good as to tell the court in those terms your percentage of certainty that this man" — he pointed to Sam — "is Monsieur Sam Bolton and the husband of Madame Bolton, who seeks leave to presume his death?"

"You may call my identification ninety-eight per cent. certain," I replied.

But it was the odd two per cent. of uncertainty which, unfortunately, lost the case for Sam. We had dinner together that evening and, all things considered, I thought he accepted the verdict philo-

sophically. I wished I had been better able to help him, because he made no effort to coach me or urge me to color my testimony in his favor.

Having put the Mas des Violettes into the hands of an agent for sale I returned to London believing that I had heard the last of Sam and Therese. That was in 1947. Some time in 1948 I received an offer for the house.

The agent told me that the prospective buyer would probably pay more. He was a rich American who had made a fortune in Venezuela. Two weeks later the house was sold for a high price, which enabled me to pension off Alphonsine, who had so loyally served my aunt and myself.

Soon after that Alphonsine wrote to tell me that eighty-odd houses had been built upon the La Bastide property, but that Therese's uncle, being pretty slick, had got away with the major share of the loot. Therese was still living in the same house, which, instead of standing in a smiling olive grove, was surrounded by nasty little stucco villas. She was stretching her small income by taking boarders.

It was not until the summer of 1955 that I again visited the French Riviera. I was strolling down the Boulevard Carnot in Cannes when a large, expensive-looking car came silently alongside me and stopped.

At the wheel was Sam. "Hello, Bill," he said. "Nice to see you again. How's tricks?"

"Hello, Sam," I replied, "that is, if you are Sam."

"Well, call me ninety-eight per cent. Sam," he said with a grin. "Free for lunch?"

We drove up into the hills and the big car glided through the open gates of — yes, the Mas des Violettes. "The most beautiful, peaceful spot in the whole world," he said with deep contentment in his voice. This was one love which had not wavered over the years.

The house was filled with fine pictures, exquisite Persian rugs, and the kind of Provencal furniture that belonged in a museum. Everywhere were evidences of wealth.

"You seem to have done pretty well for yourself, Sam," I remarked. "Did you break the bank at Monte Carlo?"

"No," in Venezuelan oil leases."

"Do you still call yourself Sam Bolton?"

"Fancy you remembering that!" he said. "Let me introduce you to Sam Waters, late of Caracas, Venezuela. Very unhealthy country — some parts of Venezuela. That's where I must have picked up that attack of amnesia which gave me the mad idea that I was Sam Bolton."

"You know, Sam," I remarked thoughtfully, "it might have been awkward if, instead of losing that lawsuit, you had won it."

"Don't say such things, Bill, not even in fun," he said with a shudder. "Just fancy being married to that terrifying woman next door. Funny thing about her, by the way, is that she has amnesia now. Must have caught it from me."

"What makes you say that, Sam?" I asked.

"Well, although she swore on a stack of Bibles that she'd never seen me before in her life, she now says that she was married to me. If she isn't careful she'll be getting herself into trouble — very nasty thing, amnesia."

"I think it's a great pity she ever left that hotel in Normandy," I said. "She was as happy as a lark hammering away all day at that cash register."

"What a beautiful touch she had!" said Sam reminiscently.

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# AS I READ THE STARS by Eve Hilliard

For week beginning December 24

## Your Sign Your Luck Your Job Your Home Your Heart Socially

<p><b>ARIES</b> The Ram MARCH 21—APRIL 20</p> <p><b>TAURUS</b> The Bull APRIL 21—MAY 20</p> <p><b>GEMINI</b> The Twins MAY 21—JUNE 20</p> <p><b>CANCER</b> The Crab JUNE 21—JULY 22</p> <p><b>LEO</b> The Lion JULY 23—AUGUST 22</p> <p><b>VIRGO</b> The Virgin AUGUST 23—SEPTEMBER 22</p> <p><b>LIBRA</b> The Balance SEPTEMBER 23—OCTOBER 22</p> <p><b>SCORPIO</b> The Scorpion OCTOBER 23—NOVEMBER 22</p> <p><b>SAGITTARIUS</b> The Archer NOVEMBER 23—DECEMBER 22</p> <p><b>CAPRICORN</b> The Goat DECEMBER 23—JANUARY 19</p> <p><b>AQUARIUS</b> The Waterbearer JANUARY 20—FEBRUARY 19</p> <p><b>PISCES</b> The Fish FEBRUARY 20—MARCH 20</p>	<p>★ Lucky number this week, 3. Lucky color for love, mauve. Gambling color, mauve, orange. Lucky days, Tuesday, Thursday. Luck in an announcement.</p> <p>★ Lucky number this week, 9. Lucky color for love, red. Gambling colors, red, navy. Lucky days, Monday, Sunday. Luck in new scenes.</p> <p>★ Lucky number this week, 8. Lucky color for love, black. Gambling colors, black, white. Lucky days, Tuesday, Saturday. Luck on an outside chance.</p> <p>★ Lucky number this week, 1. Lucky color for love, yellow. Gambling colors, yellow, grey. Lucky days, Monday, Saturday. Luck in partnership.</p> <p>★ Lucky number this week, 4. Lucky color for love, orange. Gambling colors, orange, brown. Lucky days, Thursday, Friday. Luck in vitality.</p> <p>★ Lucky number this week, 2. Lucky color for love, white. Gambling colors, white, gold. Lucky days, Wednesday, Friday. Luck in a romance.</p> <p>★ Lucky number this week, 7. Lucky color for love, any pastel. Gambling colors, tricolors. Lucky days, Monday, Friday. Luck in a happy home.</p> <p>★ Lucky number this week, 5. Lucky color for love, grey. Gambling colors, grey, red. Lucky days, Monday, Thursday. Luck in quick wins.</p> <p>★ Lucky number this week, 6. Lucky color for love, navy. Gambling colors, navy, white. Lucky days, Tuesday, Sunday. Luck in judgment.</p> <p>★ Lucky number this week, 5. Lucky color for love, green. Gambling colors, green, rose. Lucky days, Wednesday, Saturday. Luck in your talents.</p> <p>★ Lucky number this week, 1. Lucky color for love, brown. Gambling colors, brown, green. Lucky days, Friday, Saturday. Luck in a box.</p> <p>★ Lucky number this week, 3. Lucky color for love, violet. Gambling colors, violet, grey. Lucky days, Tuesday, Thursday. Luck in friends.</p>	<p>★ Whether you work for love, as a homemaker, or whether for money in some occupation, prestige is increasing. Compliments lead to increased income. You'll rejoice.</p> <p>★ Successful holidays require plenty of hard work in preparation. Many rush to get away from ordinary routine. Make sure important things will not be forgotten.</p> <p>★ There are folks who wish to keep you in the dark until the right moment. Don't be astonished if a simple request is refused. There's a reason for it.</p> <p>★ You are going to be in charge of a number of enterprises and set tasks for others is no joy. Your enthusiasm will help to keep everybody busy.</p> <p>★ You will win through by keeping right on the track, and by persuading others to your way. You'll be working harder than all the rest on your pet project.</p> <p>★ Out to make a splash and you are inclined to say: "Hang the expense!" Personal popularity is high. A piece of good luck could arrive in your Christmas stockings.</p> <p>★ A change of work is as good as a holiday. If in a career, you'll go domestic. If a housewife, you help by doing something unusual. It gives you a sense of achievement.</p> <p>★ Last-minute jobs keep you racing. You wind up in a whirl of errands and odd details, but you'll be seeing all sorts of people that attract you.</p> <p>★ The start of the festive season could be heralded by increased income, either in recognition of your abilities or in the form of a bonus.</p> <p>★ Yours is a sensible sign as a rule, but this week you decide to have fun. You work only when in the mood, and refuse to take it seriously.</p> <p>★ Some have a special task you are eager to complete during the holidays. It may be a labor of love or a money-saving proposition. Either way you'll be happy.</p> <p>★ Work is turned into play when you are doing it with mates. You scramble through the minimum, then hold a series of talkfests. Don't let gossip exceed discretion.</p>	<p>★ You either keep open house for relatives, friends and neighbors, or you lock up the place and rush off to accept hospitality. There will be no middle ground.</p> <p>★ You refuse to be pinned down in one spot. Travel preparations may outweigh even Christmas festivities. Younger members of the house may take part in sports.</p> <p>★ Those who are counting on the next week to improve the home may flourish the paintbrush, renovate worn spots, add amenities, or build a barbecue.</p> <p>★ Happiest moment of the year is when you sit down to Christmas dinner. Your sign has the true family spirit. Make in a few lonely outsiders, and joy is complete.</p> <p>★ You keep the wheels turning. Those around appreciate it. A pleasant reward, such as the realization of a dream or freedom from an old anxiety.</p> <p>★ The week is filled with good times, popularity plus, success. Push your luck while the stars are on your side. Outdoor stunts bring happiest hours, so buzz off.</p> <p>★ If your Christmas present is a new home, you'll be filled with ideas, prompt to carry them out. Otherwise, you gather the household into a harmonious group.</p> <p>★ Welcome news could set your home off in a new tangent, with the family talking excitedly and everybody ready for new developments.</p> <p>★ Pushing away impractical suggestions, you offer the family a couple of sound ideas, likely to influence the choice of a present, or a decision over holidays.</p> <p>★ Congratulations head your way. You come out of your shell. A change in personality may be due to a new frock, hairdo, or smart accessories.</p> <p>★ If compelled to spend holidays at home, they can still be enjoyable. Keep your home cool, put away ornaments, provide light meals, and be lazy.</p> <p>★ Many put wheels under the home and trundle off to parts unknown, where you run into old and new friends. Camping has a special appeal just now.</p>	<p>★ Perhaps that announcement of your engagement will be made this week, or possibly the beloved can consider establishing a new home. You are both spotlighted.</p> <p>★ The one you love best may invite you to visit his or her folks, who live at a distance. After exams, news of success calls for a celebration.</p> <p>★ If you dread bringing an old relationship to a close, circumstances may arise enabling you to fade out and permitting you to follow up a new friendship.</p> <p>★ The bride, the bridesmaid, the wedding guests are under excellent stars. Whether it's a new romance or the culmination of one, all romantic partnerships flourish.</p> <p>★ Love can be expressed in a bunch of flowers, or even a load of manure for the garden-lover. Surprise presents are the order of the day.</p> <p>★ Lovers may meet for the first time. Some may declare love this week, others drift into understanding. Celebrations form the background of many a love affair.</p> <p>★ You and your best beloved may be invited to the home of newly-wed friends, and thus set your own thoughts yearning for that future home.</p> <p>★ Don't talk your beloved into something of which he or she disapproves. If you go on an expedition that gets you into difficulties, own up if you are to blame.</p> <p>★ With the help of elders, you and the one you love best may carry out a plan which gives pleasure to many. The experience will be a success.</p> <p>★ If you love her, then say so. If a girl, create the right atmosphere. Coming back from a party gives scope for much glamor and romance.</p> <p>★ That dawning love affair is still in the stage in which you see each other rarely yet think about each other every day. Don't rub the stardust off too soon.</p> <p>★ Those interested in surf clubs, tennis clubs, and similar organizations that find playing games leads to many friends and advances your social experience.</p>	<p>★ You're on parade. You're out among those present. You can add to your standing in the social or business world through contacts made now.</p> <p>★ Whether holiday bound, on a cruise by land or sea, or out for the day, your spirits will soar. You'll get a new psychological slant.</p> <p>★ You're not quite as sociable as usual because your mind is single-tracking on a glorious pet scheme. The rainbow effect is stimulating. Luck in a windfall probable.</p> <p>★ Evening parties boom. A certain tension may result from being constantly on the go, so do not stay until the last guests are leaving. Conserve your energy.</p> <p>★ Strenuous efforts to keep the social merry-go-round whirling repay in the pleasure you experience in doing several jobs well. You organize, contact people, and love it.</p> <p>★ You move in a romantic atmosphere, whether 16 or 60, whether compliments flow from the boy, friend or the husband of many years standing.</p> <p>★ Determined to put yourself last, you find your reward in making others happy. Your home needs to be elastic. Many visitors will come and go.</p> <p>★ Restless and eager to be on the road, you attempt to cram in many projects. If you fail to finish your programme, you cover a tremendous amount of ground.</p> <p>★ Your contribution will be practical. You load the car, run errands, light the picnic fire, or rescue younger members of the party from a catastrophe.</p> <p>★ If a teenager, you'll be the centre of attraction. If older, you lead the conversation in the right direction. Your social accomplishments are in great demand.</p> <p>★ For once you would rather be on the sidelines, an intelligent listener, or helping serve the supper. You relax, gathering forces for the social fray.</p> <p>★ Pisceans are in the swim, either actively or figuratively. If it is a beach party you'll be in it heart and soul. They sing "You're a jolly good fellow."</p>
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## Make savouries quicker . . . easier . . . with tasty KRAFT SPREADS

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to very few of the female sex. He shut his eyes in pain. Why, oh why, must young women array themselves thus? Those scarlet thighs were singularly unattractive!

"They seem heavily laden," he murmured.

"Yes, sir, and it's a long pull from the station or the bus stop. Best part of two miles to Hoodown Park." He hesitated. "If you don't object, sir, we could give them a lift?"

"By all means, by all means," said Poirot benignantly. There was he in luxury in an almost empty car and here were these two panting and perspiring young women weighed down with heavy rucksacks and without the least idea how to dress themselves so as to appear attractive to the other sex.

The chauffeur started the car and came to a slow, purring halt beside the two girls. Their flushed and perspiring faces were raised hopefully.

Poirot opened the door and the girls climbed in.

"It is most kind, please," said one of them, a fair girl with a foreign accent. "It is longer way than I think, yes."

The other girl, who had a sunburnt and deeply flushed face with bronzed chestnut curls peeping out beneath her head scarf, merely nodded her head several times, flashed her teeth, and murmured "Grazie." The fair girl continued to talk vivaciously.

"I to England come for two-week holiday. I come from Holland. I like England very much. I have been Stratford Avon, Shakespeare Theatre, and Warwick Castle. Then I have been Glovelly, now I have seen Exeter Cathedral and Torquay—very nice—I come to famous beauty spot here and tomorrow I cross river, go to Plymouth where discovery of New World was made from Plymouth Hoe."

"And you, Signorina?" Poirot turned to the other girl. But she only smiled and shook her curls.

"She does not much English speak," said the Dutch girl kindly. "We both a little French speak—so we talk in train. She is coming from near

## Continuing . . . Dead Man's Folly

from page 9

Milan and has relative in England married to gentleman who keeps shop for much groceries. She has come with friend to Exeter yesterday, but friend has eat veal ham pie not good from shop in Exeter and has to stay there sick. It is not good in hot weather, the veal ham pie."

At this point the chauffeur slowed down where the road forked. The girls got out, uttered thanks in two languages and proceeded up the left-hand road.

The chauffeur laid aside for a moment his Olympian aloofness and said feelingly to Poirot, "It's not only veal and ham pie—you want to be careful of Cornish pasties, too. Put anything in a pasty they will, holiday time!"

He restarted the car and drove down the right-hand road which shortly afterwards passed into the thick woods. He proceeded to give a final verdict on the occupants of Hoodown Park Youth Hostel.

"Nice enough young women, some of 'em, at that Hostel," he said, "but it's hard to get them to understand about trespassing. Absolutely shocking the way they trespass. Don't seem to understand that a gentleman's place is private here. Always coming through our woods, they are, and pretending that they don't understand what you say to them." He shook his head darkly.

They went on, down a steep hill through woods, then through big iron gates, and along a drive, winding up finally in front of a big white Georgian house looking out over the river.

The chauffeur opened the door of the car as a tall, black-haired butler appeared on the steps.

"Mr. Hercule Poirot?" murmured the latter.

"Yes." "Mrs. Oliver is expecting you, sir. You will find her down at the Battery. Allow me to show you the way."

Poirot was directed to a

winding path that led along the wood with glimpses of the river below. The path descended gradually until it came out at last on an open space, round in shape, with a low battlemented parapet. On the parapet Mrs. Oliver was sitting.

She rose to meet him and several apples fell from her lap and rolled in all directions. Apples seemed to be inescapably part and parcel of meeting Mrs. Oliver.

"I can't think why I always drop things," said Mrs. Oliver somewhat indistinctly, since her mouth was full of apple. "How are you, M. Poirot?"

"Très bien, chère Madame," replied Poirot politely. "And you?"

MRS. OLIVER was looking somewhat different from when Poirot had last seen her, and the reason lay, as she had already hinted over the telephone, in the fact that she had once more experimented with her hair styles. The last time Poirot had seen her, she had been adopting a windswept effect. Today, her hair, richly blued, was piled upwards in little curls.

By contrast, the rest of her could have been definitely labelled "country practical," consisting of a violent yolk of egg rough tweed coat and skirt and a rather bilious-looking mustard colored jumper.

"I knew you'd come," said Mrs. Oliver cheerfully.

"You could not possibly have known," said Poirot severely.

"Oh, yes, I did."

"I still ask myself why I am here."

"Well, I know the answer. Curiosity."

Poirot looked at her and his eyes twinkled a little.

"Your famous woman's intuition," he said, "has, perhaps, for once not led you too far astray."

"Now, don't laugh at my woman's intuition. Haven't I always spotted the murderer right away?"

Poirot was gallantly silent. Otherwise he might have replied, "At the fifth attempt, perhaps, and not always then!"

Instead he said, looking round him. "It is indeed a beautiful property that you have here."

"This? But it doesn't belong to me, M. Poirot. Did you think it did? Oh, no, it belongs to some people called Stubbs."

"Who are they?"

"Oh, nobody really," said Mrs. Oliver, vaguely. "Just rich. No, I'm down here professionally, doing a job."

"Ah, you are getting local color for one of your chef d'œuvres?"

"No, no. Just what I said. I'm doing a job. I've been engaged to arrange a murder."

Poirot stared at her.

"Oh, not a real one," said Mrs. Oliver reassuringly. "There's a big fete thing on tomorrow, and as a kind of novelty there's going to be a Murder Hunt. Arranged by me. Like a Treasure Hunt, you see! Only they've had a Treasure Hunt so often that they thought this would be a novelty. So they offered me a very substantial fee to come down and think it up. Quite fun, really—rather a change from the usual grim routine."

"How does it work?"

"Well, there'll be a Victim, of course. And Clues. And Suspects. All rather conventional—you know, the Vamp and the Blackmailer and the Young Lovers and the Sinister Butler and so on. Half-a-crown to enter and you get shown the first clue and you've got to find the victim and the weapon and whodunnit and the motive. And there are prizes."

"Remarkable!" said Hercule Poirot.

"Actually," said Mrs. Oliver ruefully, "it's all much harder to arrange than you'd think. Because you've got to allow

for real people being quite intelligent, and in my books they needn't be."

"And it is to assist you in arranging this that you have sent for me?"

Poirot did not try very hard to keep an outraged resentment out of his voice.

"Oh, no," said Mrs. Oliver. "Of course not! I've done all that. Everything's all set for tomorrow. No, I wanted you for quite another reason."

"What reason?"

Mrs. Oliver's hands strayed upward to her head. She was just about to sweep them frenziedly through her hair in the old familiar gesture when she remembered the intricacy of her hair-do. Instead, she relieved her feelings by tugging at her ear lobes.

"I daresay I'm a fool," she said. "But I think there's something wrong."

There was a moment's silence as Poirot stared at her. Then he asked sharply: "Something wrong? How?"

"I don't know . . . That's what I want you to find out. But I've felt—more and more—that I was being—oh!—engineered . . . jockeyed along . . . Call me a fool if you like, but I can only say that if there was to be a real murder tomorrow instead of a fake one, I shouldn't be surprised!"

Poirot stared at her and she looked back at him defiantly. "Very interesting," said Poirot.

"I suppose you think I'm a complete fool," said Mrs. Oliver defensively.

"I have never thought you a fool," said Poirot.

"And I know what you always say—or look—about intuition."

"One calls things by different names," said Poirot. "I am quite ready to believe that you have noticed something, or heard something, that has definitely aroused in you anxiety. I think it possible that you yourself may not even know just what it is that you have seen or noticed or heard. You are aware only of the result. If I may so put it, you do not know what it is that you know."

You may label that intuition if you like."

"It makes one feel such a fool," said Mrs. Oliver, ruefully, "not to be able to be definite."

"We shall arrive," said Poirot encouragingly. "You say that you have had the feeling of being—how did you put it—jockeyed along? Can you explain a little more clearly what you mean by that?"

"Well, it's rather difficult . . . You see, this is my murder, so to speak. I've thought it out and planned it and it all fits in—dovetails. Well, if you know anything at all about writers, you'll know that they can't stand suggestions. People say 'Splendid, but wouldn't it be better if so and so did so and so?' Or 'wouldn't it be a wonderful idea if the victim was A instead of B? Or the murderer turned out to be D instead of E?' I mean, one wants to say: 'All right, then, write it yourself if you want it that way!'"

Poirot nodded. "And that is what has been happening?"

"Not quite . . . That sort of silly suggestion has been made, and then I've flared up, and they've given in, but have just slipped in some quite minor trivial suggestion and because I've made a stand over the other, I've accepted the triviality without noticing much."

"I see," said Poirot. "Yes—it is a method, that . . . Something rather crude and preposterous is put forward—but that is not really the point. The small minor alteration is really the objective. Is that what you mean?"

"That's exactly what I mean," said Mrs. Oliver. "And, of course, I may be imagining it, but I don't think I am—and none of the things seem to matter anyway. But it's got me worried—that, and a sort of—well—atmosphere."

"Who has made these suggestions of alterations to you?"

"Different people," said Mrs. Oliver. "If it was just one person I'd be more sure of my ground. But it's not just one person—although I think it is really. I mean it's one person

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working through other quite unsuspecting people."

"Have you an idea as to who that one person is?"

Mrs. Oliver shook her head. "It's somebody very clever and very careful," she said. "It might be anybody."

"Who is there?" asked Poirot. "The cast of characters must be fairly limited?"

"Well," began Mrs. Oliver. "There's Sir George Stubbs, who owns this place. Rich and plebeian and frightfully stupid outside business, I should think, but probably dead sharp in it. And there's Lady Stubbs—Hattie—about twenty years younger than he is, rather beautiful, but dumb as a fish—in fact, I think she's definitely half-witted. Married him for his money, of course, and doesn't think about anything but clothes and jewels. Then there's Michael Weyman—he's an architect, quite young, and good-looking in a craggy kind of artistic way. He's designing a tennis pavilion for Sir George and repairing the Folly."

"Folly? What is that—a masquerade?"

"No, it's architectural. One of those little sort of temple things, white, with columns. You've probably seen them at Kew. Then there's Miss Brewis, she's a sort of secretary-housekeeper, who runs things and writes letters—very grim and efficient."

Poirot nodded shortly.

"And then there are the people round about who come in and help," Mrs. Oliver continued her recital. "A young married couple who have taken a cottage down by the river—Alec Legge and his wife, Peggy. And Captain Warburton, who's the Masterton's agent. And the Mastertons, of course—he's the local M.P. And there's old Mrs. Folliat, who lives in what used to be the Lodge. Her husband's people owned Nasse originally. But they've died out, or been killed in the wars, and there were lots of death duties, so the last heir sold the place."

Poirot considered this list of characters, but at the moment they were only names to him. He returned to the main issue.

"Whose idea was the Murder Hunt?"

"Mrs. Masterton's, I think. She's very good at organising. It was she who persuaded Sir George to have the fete here. You see, the place has been empty for so many years that she thinks people will be keen to pay to come in to see it."

"That all seems straightforward enough," said Poirot.

"It all seems straightforward," said Mrs. Oliver obstinately, "but it isn't. I tell you, M. Poirot, there's something wrong."

Poirot looked at Mrs. Oliver and Mrs. Oliver looked back at Poirot.

"Have you accounted for my presence here? For your summons to me?" Poirot asked.

"That was easy," said Mrs. Oliver. "You're to give away the prizes for the Murder Hunt. Everybody's awfully thrilled. I said I knew you, and could probably persuade you to come and that I was sure your name would be a terrific draw—as, of course, it will be," Mrs. Oliver added tactfully.

"And the suggestion was accepted—without demur?"

"I tell you, everybody was thrilled."

Mrs. Oliver thought it unnecessary to mention that among the younger generation one or two had asked "Who is Hercule Poirot?"

"Everybody? Nobody spoke against the idea?"

Mrs. Oliver shook her head. "That is a pity," said Hercule Poirot.

"You mean it might have given us a line?"

"A would-be criminal could hardly be expected to welcome my presence."

"I suppose you think I've imagined the whole thing," said Mrs. Oliver ruefully. "I must

admit that until I started talking to you I hadn't realised how very little I've got to go upon."

"Calm yourself," said Poirot kindly. "I am intrigued and interested. Where do we begin?"

Mrs. Oliver glanced at her watch.

"It's just tea-time. We'll go back to the house and then you can meet everybody."

She took a different path from the one by which Poirot had come. This one seemed to lead in the opposite direction.

"We pass by the boathouse this way," Mrs. Oliver explained.

As she spoke the boathouse came into view. It jutted out on to the river and was a picturesque thatched affair.

"That's where the Body's going to be," said Mrs. Oliver. "The body for the Murder Hunt, I mean."

"And who is going to be killed?"

"Oh—a girl hiker, who is really the Yugoslavian first wife of a young Atom Scientist," said Mrs. Oliver glibly.

Poirot blinked.

"Of course, it looks as though the Atom Scientist had killed her—but naturally it's not as simple as that."

"Naturally not—since you are concerned—"

Mrs. Oliver accepted the compliment with a wave of the hand.

"Actually," she said, "she's killed by the Country Squire—and the motive is really rather ingenious—I don't believe many people will get it—though there's a perfectly clear pointer to the fifth clue."

Poirot abandoned the subtleties of Mrs. Oliver's plot to ask a practical question.

"But how do you arrange for a suitable body?"

"Girl Guide," said Mrs. Oliver. "Peggy Legge was going to be it—but now they want her to dress up in a turban and do the fortune telling. So it's a Girl Guide called Marlene Tucker. Rather dumb and sniffs."

She added in an explanatory manner: "It's quite easy—just peasant scarves and a rucksack—and all she has to do when she hears someone coming is to flop down on the floor and arrange the cord round her neck. Rather dull for the poor kid—just sticking inside that boathouse until she's found, but I've arranged for her to have a nice bundle of comics—there's a clue to the murderer scribbled on one of them as a matter of fact—so it all works in."

"Your ingenuity leaves me spellbound! The things you think of!"

"It's never difficult to think of things," said Mrs. Oliver. "The trouble is that you think of too many, and then it all becomes too complicated, so you have to relinquish some of them and that is rather angry. We go up this way now."

They started up a steep zig-zagging path that led them back along the river at a higher level. At a twist through the trees they came out on a space surmounted by a small white plastered temple. Standing back and frowning at it was a young man wearing dilapidated flannel trousers and a shirt of rather virulent green. He spun round towards them.

"Mr. Michael Weyman, M. Hercule Poirot," said Mrs. Oliver.

The young man acknowledged the introduction with a careless nod.

"Extraordinary," he said bitterly, "the places people put things! This thing here, for instance. Put up only about a year ago—quite nice of its kind and quite in keeping with the period of the house. But why here? These things were meant to be seen—situated on an

## Continuing . . . Dead Man's Folly

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eminence, that's how they phrased it—with a nice grassy approach and daffodils, etcetera. But here's this poor little devil, stuck away in the midst of trees—not visible from anywhere—you'd have to cut down about twenty trees before you'd even see it from the river."

"Perhaps there wasn't any other place," said Mrs. Oliver.

Michael Weyman snorted.

"Top of that grassy bank by the house—perfect natural setting. But no, these tycoon fellows are all the same—no artistic sense. Has a fancy for a 'Folly' as he calls it, orders one. Looks round for somewhere to put it. Then, I understand, a big oak tree crashes down in a gale. Leaves a nasty scar. 'Oh, we'll tidy the place up by putting a Folly there,' says the silly ass. That's all they ever think about, these rich city fellows, tidying up! I wonder he hasn't put beds of red geraniums and calceolarias all round the house! A man like that shouldn't be allowed to own a place like this!"

He sounded heated.

have a job," Mrs. Oliver pointed out reasonably enough. She moved on towards the house and Poirot and the dispirited architect prepared to follow her.

"These tycoons," said the latter bitterly, "can't understand first principles." He delivered a final kick to the lopsided Folly. "If the foundations are rotten—everything's rotten."

"It is profound what you say there," said Poirot. "Yes, it is profound."

The path they were following came out from the trees and the house showed white and beautiful before them in its setting of dark trees rising up behind it.

"It is of a veritable beauty," yes," murmured Poirot.

"He wants to build a billiard-room on," said Mr. Weyman venomously.

On the bank below them a small elderly lady was busy with secateurs on a clump of shrubs. She climbed up to greet them, panting slightly.

"Everything neglected for years," she said. "And so difficult nowadays to get a man who understands shrubs. This



This young man, Poirot observed to himself, assuredly does not like Sir George Stubbs.

"It's bedded down in concrete," said Weyman. "And there's loose soil underneath—so it's subsided. Cracked all up here—it will be dangerous soon. Better pull the whole thing down and erect it on the top of the bank near the house. That's my advice, but the obstinate old fool won't hear of it."

"What about the tennis pavilion?" asked Mrs. Oliver.

Gloom settled even more deeply on the young man.

"He wants a kind of Chinese pagoda," he said with a groan. "Dragons if you please! Just because Lady Stubbs fancies herself in Chinese coolie hats! Who'd be an architect? Any-one who wants something decent built hasn't got the money, and those who have the money want something too utterly awful!"

"You have my commiserations," said Poirot gravely.

"George Stubbs," said the architect scornfully. "Who does he think he is? Dug himself into some cushy Admiralty job in the safe depths of Wales during the war—and grows a beard to suggest he saw active Naval service on convoy duty—or that's what they say. Crawling with money—absolutely crawling!"

"Well, you architects have got to have someone who's got money to spend, or you'd never

viously careless of her appearance, she had that indefinable air of being someone, which is so hard to explain.

As they walked together towards the house, Poirot said diffidently, "It must be hard for you to have strangers living here."

There was a moment's pause before Mrs. Folliat answered. Her voice was clear and precise and curiously devoid of emotion.

"So many things are hard, M. Poirot," she said.

It was Mrs. Folliat who led the way into the house and Poirot followed her. It was a gracious house, beautifully proportioned. Mrs. Folliat went through a door on the left into a small daintily furnished sitting-room and on into the big drawing-room beyond, which was full of people who all seemed, at the moment, to be talking at once.

"George," said Mrs. Folliat. "This is M. Poirot, who is so kind as to come and help us. Sir George Stubbs."

Sir George, who had been talking in a loud voice, swung round. He was a big man with a rather florid red face and a slightly unexpected beard. It gave a rather disconcerting effect of an actor who had not quite properly made up his mind whether he was playing the part of a country squire or of a "rough diamond" from the Dominions. It certainly did not suggest the Navy, in spite of Michael Weyman's remarks.

His manner and voice were jovial, but his eyes were small and shrewd, of a particularly penetrating pale blue. He greeted Poirot heartily.

"We're so glad that your friend Mrs. Oliver managed to persuade you to come," he said. "Quite a brainwave on her part. You'll be an enormous attraction."

He looked round a little vaguely.

"Hattie?" He repeated the name in a slightly sharper tone. "Hattie!"

Lady Stubbs was reclining in a big armchair a little distance from the others. She seemed to be paying no attention to what was going on round her. Instead she was smiling down at her hand, which was stretched out on the arm of the chair. She was turning it from left to right, so that a big solitaire emerald on her third finger caught the light in its green depths.

She looked up now in a slightly startled childlike way and said, "How do you do?"

Poirot bowed over her hand.

Sir George continued his introductions: "Mrs. Masterton."

Mrs. Masterton was a somewhat monumental woman who reminded Poirot faintly of a bloodhound. She had a full underhung jaw and large mournful, slightly bloodshot eyes.

She bowed and resumed her discourse in a deep voice which again made Poirot think of a bloodhound's baying note.

"This silly dispute about the tea tent has got to be settled, Jim," she said forcefully. "They've got to see sense about it. We can't have the whole show a fiasco because of these idiotic women's local feuds."

"Oh, quite," said the man addressed.

"Captain Warburton," said Sir George.

Captain Warburton, who wore a check sports coat and had a vaguely horsey appearance, showed a lot of white teeth in a somewhat wolfish smile, then continued his conversation.

"Don't you worry, I'll settle it," he said. "I'll go and talk to them like a Dutch uncle. What about the fortune-telling tent? In the space by the magnolia? Or at the far end of

the lawn by the rhododendrons?"

Sir George continued his introductions.

"Mr. and Mrs. Legge."

A tall young man with his face peeling badly from sunburn grinned agreeably. His wife, an attractive freckled redhead, nodded in a friendly fashion, then plunged into controversy with Mrs. Masterton, her agreeable high treble making a kind of duet with Mrs. Masterton's deep bay.

"—not by the magnolia—a bottle neck—"

"—one wants to disperse things—but if there's a queue—"

"—much cooler, I mean, with the sun full on the house—"

"—and the coconut shy can't be too near the house—the boys are so wild when they throw—"

"And this," said Sir George, "is Miss Brewis—who runs us all."

Miss Brewis was seated behind the large silver tea-tray.

She was a spare, efficient-looking woman of forty-odd, with a brisk, pleasant manner.

"How do you do, M. Poirot?" she said. "I do hope you didn't have too crowded a journey? The trains are sometimes too terrible this time of year. Let me give you some tea. Milk? Sugar?"

"Very little milk, Mademoiselle, and four lumps of sugar." He added, as Miss Brewis dealt with his request, "I see that you are all in a great state of activity."

"Yes, indeed. There are always so many last-minute things to do. And people let one down in the most extraordinary way nowadays. Over marquees, and tents and chairs and catering equipment. One has to keep on at them. I was on the telephone half the morning."

"What about those pegs, Amanda?" said Sir George. "And the extra putters for the clock golf?"

"That's all arranged, Sir George. Mr. Benson at the Golf Club was most kind."

She handed Poirot his cup.

"A sandwich, M. Poirot? These are tomato and these are pate. But, perhaps," said Miss Brewis, thinking of the four lumps of sugar, "you would rather have a cream cake?"

Poirot would rather have a cream cake, and helped himself to a particularly sweet and squelchy one.

Then, balancing it carefully on his saucer, he went and sat down by his hostess. She was still letting the light play over the jewel on her hand, and she looked up at him with a pleased child's smile.

"Look," she said. "It's pretty, isn't it?"

He had been studying her carefully. She was wearing a big coolie-style hat of vivid magenta straw. Beneath it her face showed its pinky reflection on the dead-white surface of her skin. She was heavily made up in an exotic un-English style. Dead-white matt skin, vivid cyclamen lips, mascara applied lavishly to the eyes. Her hair showed beneath the hat, black and smooth, fitting like a velvet cap.

There was a languorous un-English beauty about the face. She was a creature of the tropical sun, caught, as it were, by chance in an English drawing-room. But it was the eyes that startled Poirot. They had a childlike, almost vacant stare.

She had asked her question in a confidential childish way and it was as though to a child that Poirot answered.

"It is a very lovely ring," he said.

She looked pleased. "George gave it to me yesterday," she said, dropping her voice as though she were sharing a secret with him. "He

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gives me lots of things. He's very kind."

Poirot looked down at the ring again and the hand outstretched on the side of the chair. The nails were very long and varnished a deep puce. Into his mind a quotation came: "They toil not, neither do they spin."

He certainly couldn't imagine Lady Stubbs toiling or spinning. And yet he would hardly have described her as a lily of the field. She was a far more artificial product.

"This is a beautiful room you have here, Madame," he said, looking round appreciatively.

"I suppose it is," said Lady Stubbs vaguely.

Her attention was still on the ring; her head on one side she watched the green fire in its depths as her hand moved. She said in a confidential whisper: "D'you see? It's winking at me."

She burst out laughing and Poirot had a sense of sudden shock. It was a loud uncontrolled laugh.

## Continuing . . . Dead Man's Folly

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From across the room Sir George said: "Hattie."

His voice was quite kind but held a faint admonition. Lady Stubbs stopped laughing.

Poirot said in a conventional manner: "Devonshire is a very lovely county. Do you not think so?"

"It's nice in the daytime," said Lady Stubbs. "When it doesn't rain," she added mournfully. "But there aren't any nightclubs."

"Ah, I see. You like nightclubs?"

"Oh, yes," said Lady Stubbs fervently.

"And why do you like nightclubs so much?"

"There is music and you dance. And I wear my nicest clothes and bracelets and rings. And all the other women have nice clothes and jewels, but not as nice as mine."

She smiled with enormous satisfaction. Poirot felt a slight pang of pity.

"And all that amuses you very much?"

"Yes. I like the Casino, too. Why are there not any Casinos in England?"

"I have often wondered," said Poirot with a sigh. "I do not think it would accord with the English character."

She looked at him uncomprehendingly. Then she bent slightly towards him.

"I won sixty-thousand francs at Monte Carlo once. I put it on number twenty-seven and it came up."

"That must have been very exciting, madame."

"Oh, it was. George gives me money to play with—but usually I lose it." She looked disconsolate.

"That is sad."

"Oh, it does not really matter. George is very rich. It is nice to be rich, don't you think so?"

"Very nice," said Poirot gently.

"Perhaps, if I was not rich, I should look like Amanda." Her gaze went to Miss Brewis at the tea-table and studied her dispassionately. "She is very ugly, don't you think?"

Miss Brewis looked up at that moment and across to where they were sitting. Lady Stubbs had not spoken loudly, but Poirot wondered whether Amanda Brewis had heard. As he withdrew his gaze, his eyes met those of Captain Warburton. The captain's gaze was ironic and amused.

Poirot endeavored to change the subject.

"Have you been very busy preparing for the fete?" he asked.

Hattie Stubbs shook her head.

"Oh, no, I think it is all very boring—very stupid. There are servants and gardeners. Why should not they make the preparations?"

"Oh, my dear." It was Mrs. Folliat who spoke. She had come to sit on the sofa nearby. "Those are the ideas you were brought up with on your island estates. But life isn't like that in England these days. I wish it were." She sighed. "Nowadays one has to do nearly everything oneself."

Lady Stubbs shrugged her shoulders.

"I think it is stupid. What is the good of being rich if one has to do everything oneself?"

"Some people find it fun," said Mrs. Folliat, smiling at her. "I do really. Not all things, but some. I like gardening myself and I like preparing for a festivity like this one tomorrow."

"It will be like a party?" asked Lady Stubbs hopefully.

"Just like a party—with lots and lots of people."

"Will it be like Ascot? With big hats and everyone very chic?"

"Well—not quite like Ascot," said Mrs. Folliat. She added gently. "But you must try to enjoy country things, Hattie. You should have helped us this morning, instead of staying in bed and not getting up until tea-time."

"I had a headache," said Hattie sulkily. Then her mood changed and she smiled affectionately at Mrs. Folliat.

"But I will be good tomorrow. I will do everything you tell me."

"That's very sweet of you, dear."

"I've got a new model to wear. It came this morning. Come upstairs with me and look at it."

Mrs. Folliat hesitated. Lady Stubbs rose to her feet and said insistently, "You must come. Please. Come now!"

"Oh, very well," Mrs. Folliat gave a half laugh and rose.

As she went out of the room, her small figure following Hattie's tall one, Poirot saw her face and was quite startled at the weariness on it which had replaced her smiling composure. It was as though, relaxed and off her guard for a moment, she no longer bothered to keep up the social mask. And yet—it seemed more than that.

Perhaps she was suffering from some illness about which, like many women do, she never spoke. She was not a person, he thought, who would care to invite pity or sympathy.

Captain Warburton dropped down in the chair Hattie Stubbs had just vacated. He, too, looked at the door through which the two women had just passed, but it was not of the older woman that he spoke. Instead he drawled, with a slight grin: "Beautiful creature, isn't she?"

POIROT was aware of Sir George's exit through a french window with Mrs. Masterton and Mrs. Oliver in tow. Captain Warburton had noted it, too.

"Bowled over old George Stubbs all right," he went on. "Nothing's too good for her! Jewels, mink, all the rest of it. Whether he realises she's a bit wanting in the top story I've never discovered. Probably thinks it doesn't matter. After all, these financial johnnies don't ask for intellectual companionship."

"What nationality is she?" Poirot asked curiously.

"Looks South American, I always think. But I believe she comes from the West Indies. One of those islands with sugar and rum and all that. One of the old families there—a creole, I don't mean a half-caste. All very intermarried, I believe, on these islands. Accounts for the mental deficiency."

Young Mrs. Legge came over to join them.

"Look here, Jim," she said, "you've got to be on my side. That tent's got to be where we all decided—on the far side of the lawn backing on the rhododendrons. It's the only possible place."

"Ma Masterton doesn't think so."

"Well, you've got to talk her out of it."

He gave her his foxy smile. "Mrs. Masterton's my boss."

"Wilfrid Masterton's your boss. He's the M.P."

"I daresay, but she should be. She's the one who wears the pants—and don't I know it."

Sir George re-entered the window.

"Oh, there you are, Peggy," he said. "We need you. You wouldn't think everyone could get het up over who butters the buns and who raffles a cake and why the garden produce stall is where the fancy woollens was promised it should be. Where's Amy Folliat? She can deal with these people—about the only person who can."

"She went upstairs with Hattie."

"Oh, did she—"

Sir George looked round in a vaguely helpless manner and Miss Brewis jumped up from where she was writing tickets and said: "I'll fetch her for you, Sir George."

"Thank you, Amanda."

Miss Brewis went out of the room.

"Must get hold of some more wire fencing," murmured Sir George.

"For the fete?"

"No, no. To put up where we adjourn Hoo-down Park in the woods. The old stuff's rotted away, and that's where they get through!"

"Who get through?"

"Trespassers!" ejaculated Sir George.

Peggy Legge said amusedly, "You sound like Betsy Trotwood campaigning against donkeys."

"Betsy Trotwood? Who's she?" asked Sir George simply.

"Dickens."

"Oh, Dickens. I read the 'Pickwick Papers' once. Not bad. Not bad at all—surprised me. But, seriously, trespassers are a menace since they've started this Youth Hostel tomfoolery. They come out at you from everywhere wearing the most incredible shirts—boy this morning had one all covered with crawling turtles and things—made me think I'd been hitting the bottle or something. Half of them can't speak English—just jibber at you—"

He mimicked: "Oh, pless—yes haf you—tell me—iss way to ferry? I say 'No, it isn't,' roar at them, and send them back where they've come from, but half the time they just blink and stare and don't understand. And the girls giggle. All kinds of nationalities, Italian, Yugoslavian, Dutch, Finnish—Eskimo. I shouldn't be surprised! Half of them Communists, I shouldn't wonder," he ended darkly.

"Come, now, George, don't get started on Communists," said Mrs. Legge. "I'll come and help you deal with the rabid women."

She led him out of the window and called over her shoulder to Masterton: "Come on, Jim. Come and be torn to pieces in a good cause."

"All right, but I want to put M. Poirot in the picture about the Murder Hunt since he's going to present the prizes."

"You can do that presently."

"I will await you here," said Poirot agreeably.

In the ensuing silence, Alec Legge stretched himself out in his chair and sighed.

"Women!" he said. "Like a swarm of bees."

He turned his head to look out of the window.

"And what's it all about? Some silly Garden Fete that doesn't matter to anyone."

"But obviously," Poirot pointed out, "there are those to whom it does matter."

"Why can't people have some sense? Why can't they think? Think of the mess the whole world has got itself into. Don't they realise that the inhabitants of the globe are busy committing suicide?"

Poirot judged rightly that he was not intended to reply to this question. He merely shook his head doubtfully.

"Unless we can do something before it's too late—" Alec Legge broke off. An angry look swept over his face.

"Oh, yes," he said. "I know what you're thinking. That I'm nervous, neurotic—all the rest of it. Like those infernal doctors. Advising rest and change and sea air. All right, George and I came down here and took the Mill Cottage for three months, and I've followed their prescription. I've fished and bathed and taken long walks and sunbathed—"

"I noticed that you had sunbathed, yes," said Poirot politely.

"Oh this?" Alec's hand went to his sore face. "That's the result of a fine English summer for once in a way. But what's the good of it all? You can't get away from facing truth just by running away from it."

"No, it is never any good running away."

"And being in a rural atmosphere like this just makes you realise things more keenly—that and the incredible apathy of the people of this country. Even Peggy, who's intelligent enough, is just the same. Why bother? That's what she says. It makes me mad! Why bother?"

"As a matter of interest, why do you?"

"What, you, too?"

"No, it is not advice. It is just that I would like to know your answer."

"Don't you see, somebody's got to do something?"

"And that somebody is you?"

"No, no, not me personally. One can't be personal in times like these."

"I do not see why not. Even in 'these times,' as you call it, one is still a person."

"But one shouldn't be! In times of stress, when it's a matter of life or death, one can't think of one's own insignificant ills or preoccupations."

"I assure you, you are quite wrong. In the late war, during a severe air-raid, I was much less preoccupied by the thought of death than of the pain from a corn on my little toe. It surprised me at the time that it should be so. 'Think,' I said to myself, 'at any moment now, death may come.' But I was still conscious of my corn—indeed, I felt injured that I should have that to suffer as well as the fear of death."

Alec Legge only shrugged. "It was because I might die that every small, personal matter in my life acquired increased importance," Poirot continued.

"I have seen a woman knocked down in a street accident, with a broken leg, and she has burst out crying because she sees that there is a ladder in her stocking."

"Which just shows you what fools women are!"

"It shows you what people are. It is, perhaps, that absorption in one's personal life that has led the human race to survive."

Alec Legge gave a scornful laugh.

"Sometimes," he said, "I think it's a pity they ever did."

"It is, you know," Poirot persisted, "a form of humility. And humility is valuable. There was a slogan that was written up in your Underground railways here, I remember, during the war. 'It all depends on you.' It was composed, I think, by some eminent divine—but in my opinion it was a dangerous and undesirable doctrine. For it is not true. Everything does not depend on you, say, Mrs. Blank, of Little-Blank-in-the-March. And if she is led to think it does, it will not be good for her character. While she thinks of the part she can play in world affairs, the baby pulls over the kettle."

"You are rather old-fashioned in your views, I think. Let's hear what your slogan would be."

"I do not need to formulate one of my own. There is an older one in this country which contents me very well."

"What is that?"

"Put your trust in God, and keep your powder dry."

"Well, well—" Alec Legge seemed amused. "Most unexpected coming from you. Do you know what I should like to see done in this country?"

"Something, no doubt, forceful and unpleasant," said Poirot smiling.

Alec Legge remained serious. "I should like to see every feeble-minded person put out—right out! Don't let them breed. If, for one generation, only the intelligent were allowed to breed, think what the result would be!"

"A very large increase of patients in the psychiatric wards, perhaps," said Poirot dryly. "One needs roots as well as flowers on a plant, M. Legge. However large and beautiful the flowers, if the earthly roots are destroyed there will be no more flowers." He added in a conversational tone: "Would you consider Lady Stubbs a candidate for the lethal chamber?"

"Yes, indeed. What's the good of a woman like that? What contributions has she ever made to society? Has she ever had an idea in her head that

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SAVLON—ANTISEPTIC CREAM

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THE AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S WEEKLY—December 26, 1956



## The D, E, and F of the Gardener's ABC

● Do you know what a dibber is, what earthing-up means? You'll find a simple explanation in this week's section of The Gardener's ABC.

**WE** introduced this feature last week as a quick and handy garden guide for beginners puzzled by experts' words and terms. Here we continue with the Ds, Es, and Fs.

**DDT:** An abbreviation of Dichloro-diphenyl-trichlorethane, a chemical insecticide. Safe to use if handled carefully, it should not be sprayed on vegetables when mature and ready for the table.

**DECIDUOUS:** Trees and shrubs that lose their leaves every year.

**DENDROBIUM** (dendrobe): Tree-loving. A species of orchids that live with or on trees, but do not parasitise or draw sap from them.

**DIBBER, DIBBLE:** A short, cone-like or pointed tool used to make holes in soil when setting out seedlings, bulbs, or rooted cuttings.

**DIEBACK:** Gradual dying back of a tree or shrub from the tip of its twigs and branches.

**DIOECIOUS:** Having staminate (male) and pistillate (female) flowers on separate plants, such as holly, Chinese gooseberry, aucuba japonica.

**DISBUDDING:** Removing flower-buds when small to increase the eventual size and improve the quality of those left, practised with dahlias, chrysanthemums, zinnias, and tomatoes.

**DIVISION:** Separating a root mass or clump into sections, each of which may produce a new plant.

**DORMANT:** Period during which plants make no active growth. While this is usually a winter occurrence with deciduous shrubs and trees, some others, such as azaleas, rhododendrons, and camellias, are considered to be as near dormant as they ever become when in full flower.

**DRILL:** Shallow furrow in which seeds are sown in seed-boxes or open-air beds.

**DRUPE:** Fleishy, one-seeded fruit, such as plum, peach, nectarine, apricot, and cherry.

**DWARFING:** Severe pruning of top growth or roots of shrubs or trees to restrict size and retard rate of growth. Known as Bonsai in Japan, this process often includes binding the trunks with wire, and limiting the nutriment and moisture content of the soil.

**EARTHING-UP:** Sometimes called "hilling-up." Drawing the soil around the base of plants for support, blanching, protection against frost and certain insect pests.

**EPIPHYTE:** "Air plant" or organism that scarcely roots, but grows on other plants, particularly trees, without

being parasitic. Dendrobiums, vandaceous orchids, and many ferns, particularly stag and elkhorns, are epiphytes.

**ESPALIER:** Vine, shrub, or tree (chiefly fruit) trained to grow flat on a support, in a series of one or more branching arms.

**EVERGREEN:** Always green; the opposite of deciduous. Plant, shrub, or tree that holds its foliage more than a year.

**EDGING PLANTS:** Plants used along the margins of beds or borders, usually in formal gardens. Species used include annuals and perennials of many kinds, such as gazanias, alyssums, mesembryanthemums, echeverias, ajugas, silenes, phlox subulata.

**EXOTIC:** Not native in origin; an introduced plant. A term generally used to describe tropical species of flowers, shrubs, and trees.

**F-1:** The "first filial" generation of descent from a given

● **ENGELMANNI** variety of fuchsia. Softly colored and with a pretty leaf, it is an attractive flower for indoor decoration. Fuchsias should be cut back fairly hard after they have flowered.

set of parents or a seedling member of that generation. An F-1 hybrid combines the outstanding qualities of its parents. F-1 is a comparatively recent horticultural term, often used by plant-breeders.

**F-2:** Second filial generation in descent, or plants resulting from sowing seeds of F-1 hybrids. They reveal characteristics of flower color, size, habit of growth not exhibited by either parents or grand-parents.

**FAMILY:** Group of plants of several closely related genera with similar characteristics. Examples: Rose family (rosaceae); cabbage family (brassicaceae); orchid family (orchidaceae).

**FALCATE:** Botanical term meaning sabre or sickle shaped.

**FLATS:** Shallow boxes, usually 16in. by 22in., and varying in depth from 4in. to 6in., used as seedboxes.

**FLORE PLENO:** Often abbreviated in seedsmen's catalogues to "Fl-Pl," which means double flowers.

**FLORETS:** Individual, usually small, tubular flowers that make up the central disc of daisy-like flowers.

**FORCING:** Making plants bloom at a time that is not naturally their season, usually done by the use of heat and moisture under glass.

**FLORIBUNDA:** Literally, "many flowered." Commonly, a type of bush rose developed from hybrid tea and polyantha types and having clusters of large flowers.

**FUNGICIDE:** Chemical substance applied to a plant, usually as a dust or spray, to prevent or control fungus diseases. This term is often misunderstood by beginners, who use fungicides to control insects.

**FUCHSIA:** Natives of Mexico, South America, and New Zealand. The family includes many half-hardy and hardy shrubs and trees, but they are mostly medium to tall perennials cultivated in sheltered places out of doors in Australia.

**NEXT WEEK:** Beginning with the Gs.

## Continuing . . . Dead Man's Folly

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wasn't of clothes or furs or jewels? As I say, what good is she?"

"You and I," said Poirot blandly, "are certainly much more intelligent than Lady Stubbs. But—" he shook his head sadly, "it is true, I fear, that we are not nearly so ornamental."

"Ornamental—" Alec was beginning with a fierce snort, but he was interrupted by the re-entry of Mrs. Oliver and Captain Warburton through the window.

"You must come and see the clues and things for the Murder Hunt, M. Poirot," said Mrs. Oliver breathlessly, as they came in.

Poirot rose and followed obediently. They went across the hall and into a small room furnished plainly as a business office.

"Lethal weapons to your left," observed Captain Warburton, waving his hand towards a small baize-covered card table. On it were laid out a small pistol, a piece of lead piping with a rusty, sinister stain on it, a blue bottle labelled Poison, a length of clothesline, and a hypodermic syringe.

"Those are the Weapons," explained Mrs. Oliver, "and these are the Suspects."

She handed him a printed card, which he studied with interest. It read:

### SUSPECTS

Estelle Glynn, a beautiful and mysterious young woman, the guest of

Colonel Blunt, the local Squire, whose daughter Joan is married to

Peter Gaye, a young atom scientist.

Miss Willing, a housekeeper. Quiet, a butler.

Maya Stavisky, a girl hiker. Esteban Loyola, an uninvited guest.

Poirot blinked and looked towards Mrs. Oliver in mute incomprehension.

"A magnificent Cast of Characters," he said politely. "But permit me to ask, Madame, what does the Competitor do?"

"Turn the card over," said Captain Warburton.

Poirot did so.

On the other side was printed:

Name and Address . . . . .

Solution . . . . .

Name of Murderer . . . . .

Weapon . . . . .

Motive . . . . .

Time and Place . . . . .

Reasons for arriving at your conclusion . . . . .

"Everyone who enters gets one of these," explained Captain Warburton rapidly. "Also a notebook and pencil for copying clues. There will be six clues. You go on from one to the other like a Treasure Hunt, and the weapons are concealed in suspicious places. Here's the first clue. A snapshot. Everyone starts with one of these."

Poirot took the small print from him and studied it with a frown. Then he turned it upside down. He still looked puzzled. Warburton laughed.

"Ingenious bit of trick photography, isn't it?" he said complacently. "Quite simple once you know what it is."

Poirot, who did not know what it was, felt a mounting annoyance.

"Some kind of a barred window?" he suggested.

"Looks a bit like it, I admit. No, it's a section of a tennis net."

"Ah," Poirot looked again at the snapshot. "Yes—it is as you say—quite obvious when you have been told what it is!"

"So much depends on how you look at a thing," laughed Warburton.

"Only, you see," said Mrs. Oliver rapidly, "it's a screw-topped bottle, so the cork is really the clue."

"I know, Madame, that you are always full of ingenuity, but I do not quite see—"

Mrs. Oliver interrupted him. "Oh, but, of course," she said, "there's a story! A synopsis."

She turned to Captain Warburton. "Have you got the leaflets?"

"They've not come from the printers yet."

"But they promised!"

"I know. I know. Everyone always promises. They'll be ready this evening at six. I'm going in to fetch them in the car."

"Oh, good."

Mrs. Oliver gave a deep sigh and turned to Poirot.

"Well, I'll have to tell it you, then. Only I'm not very good at telling things. I mean if I write things, I get them perfectly clear, but if I talk, it always sounds the most frightful muddle; and that's why I never discuss my plots with anyone, I've learnt not to, because if I do, they just look at me blankly and say—'er—yes, but—I don't see what happened—and surely that can't possibly make a book.' So damping. And not true, because when I write it, it does!"

### MRS. OLIVER

paused for breath, and then went on: "Well, it's like this: There's Peter Gaye, who's a young Atom Scientist, and he's suspected of being in the pay of the Communists, and he's married to this girl, Joan Blunt, and his first wife's dead, but she isn't, and she turns up because she's a secret agent, or perhaps not, I mean she may really be a hiker—and the wife's having an affair, and this man Loyola turns up either to meet Maya, or to spy upon her, and there's a blackmailing letter which might be from the housekeeper, or again it might be the butler, and the revolver's missing, and as you don't know who the blackmailing letter's to, and the hypodermic syringe fell out at dinner, and after that it disappeared—"

Mrs. Oliver came to a full stop, estimating correctly Poirot's reaction.

"I know," she said sympathetically. "It sounds just a muddle, but it isn't really—not in my head—and when you see the synopsis leaflet, you'll find it's quite clear."

"And, anyway," she ended, "the story doesn't really matter, does it? I mean, not to you. All you've got to do is to present the prizes—very nice prizes, the first's a silver cigarette case shaped like a revolver—and say how remarkably clever the solver has been!"

Poirot thought to himself that the solver would indeed have been clever. In fact, he doubted very much that there would be a solver.

"Well," said Captain Warburton cheerfully, glancing at his wrist-watch. "I'd better be off to the printers and collect."

Mrs. Oliver groaned. "If they're not done—"

"Oh, they're done all right. I telephoned. So long." He left the room.

Mrs. Oliver immediately clutched Poirot by the arm and demanded in a hoarse whisper: "Well?"

"Well—what?"

"Have you found out anything? Or spotted anybody?"

Poirot replied with mild reproach in his tones: "Everybody and everything seems to me completely normal."

"Normal?"

"Well, perhaps that is not quite the right word. Lady Stubbs, as you say, is definitely

subnormal, and Mr. Legge would appear to be rather abnormal."

"Oh, he's all right," said Mrs. Oliver impatiently. "He's had a nervous breakdown."

Poirot did not question the somewhat doubtful wording of this sentence but accepted it at its face value.

"Everybody appears to be in the expected state of nervous agitation, high excitement, general fatigue, and strong irritation which are characteristic of preparations for this form of entertainment. If you could only indicate—"

"Sh!" Mrs. Oliver grasped his arm again. "Someone's coming."

It was just like a bad melodrama, Poirot felt, his own irritation mounting.

The pleasant mild face of Miss Brewis appeared round the door. "Oh, there you are, M. Poirot. I've been looking for you to show you your room."

She led him up the staircase and along a passage to a big airy room looking out over the river.

"There is a bathroom just opposite. Sir George talks of adding more bathrooms, but to do so would sadly impair the proportions of the rooms. I hope you'll find everything quite comfortable?"

"Yes, indeed." Poirot swept an appreciative eye over the small bookstand, the reading-lamp, and the box labelled "Biscuits" by the bedside. "You seem, in this house, to have everything organised to perfection. Am I to congratulate you, or my charming hostess?"

"Lady Stubbs' time is fully taken up in being charming," said Miss Brewis, a slightly acid note in her voice.

"A very decorative young woman," mused Poirot.

"As you say."

"But in other respects is she not, perhaps?" he broke off.

"Pardon. I am indiscreet. I comment on something I ought not, perhaps, to mention."

Miss Brewis gave him a steady look. She said dryly, "Lady Stubbs knows perfectly well exactly what she is doing. Besides, being, as you said, a very decorative young woman, she is also a very shrewd one."

She had turned away and left the room before Poirot's eyebrows had fully risen in surprise. So that was what the efficient Miss Brewis thought, was it? Or had she merely said so for some reason of her own? And why had she made such a statement to him—to a newcomer? Because he was a newcomer, perhaps? And also because he was a foreigner.

As Hercule Poirot had discovered by experience, there were many English people who considered that what one said to foreigners didn't count!

He frowned perplexedly, staring absently at the door out of which Miss Brewis had gone. Then he strolled over to the window and stood looking out. As he did so, he saw Lady Stubbs come out of the house with Mrs. Folliat and they stood for a moment or two talking by the big magnolia tree. Then Mrs. Folliat nodded a goodbye, picked up her gardening basket and gloves and trotted off down the drive.

Lady Stubbs stood watching her for a moment, then absently pulled off a magnolia flower, smelt it, and began slowly to walk down the path that led through the trees to the river. She looked just once over her shoulder before she disappeared from sight.

From behind the magnolia tree Michael Weyman came quietly into view, paused a moment irresolutely and then followed the tall, slim figure down into the trees.

A good-looking and dynamic

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young man, Poirot thought. With a more attractive personality, no doubt, than that of Sir George Stubbs . . .

But if so, what of it? Such patterns formed themselves eternally through life. Rich, middle-aged, unattractive husband, young and beautiful wife with or without sufficient mental development, attractive and susceptible young man. What was there in that to make Mrs. Oliver utter a peremptory summons through the telephone? Mrs. Oliver, no doubt, had a vivid imagination, but—

"But, after all," murmured Hercule Poirot to himself, "I am not a consultant in marriage guidance."

Could there really be anything in this extraordinary notion of Mrs. Oliver's that something was wrong? Mrs. Oliver was a singularly muddle-headed woman, and how she managed somehow or other to turn out coherent detective stories was beyond him, and yet, for all her muddle-headedness, she often surprised him by her sudden perception of truth.

"The time is short—short," he murmured to himself. "Is there something wrong here, as Mrs. Oliver believes? I am inclined to think there is. But what? Who is there who could enlighten me? I need to know more, much more, about the people in this house. Who is there who could inform me?"

After a moment's reflection he seized his hat (Poirot never risked going out in the evening air with uncovered head) and hurried out of his room and down the stairs. He heard afar the dictatorial baying of Mrs. Masterton's deep voice. Nearer at hand, Sir George's voice rose with an amorous intonation.

"Most becoming that yashmak thing. Wish I had you in my harem, Peggy. I shall come and have my fortune told a good deal tomorrow. What'll you tell me, eh?"

There was a slight scuffle and Peggy Legge's voice said breathlessly: "George, you mustn't."

Poirot raised his eyebrows, and slipped out of a conveniently adjacent side door. He set off at top speed down a back drive which his sense of locality enabled him to predict would at some point join the front drive.

His manoeuvre was successful and enabled him — (panting very slightly) to come up beside Mrs. Folliat and relieve her in a gallant manner of her gardening basket.

"You permit, Madame?" "Oh, thank you, M. Poirot, that's very kind of you. But it's not heavy."

"Allow me to carry it for you to your home. You live near here?"

"I actually live in the Lodge by the front gate. Sir George very kindly rents it to me."

The Lodge by the front gate of her former home . . . How did she really feel about that, Poirot wondered. Her composure was so absolute that he had no clue to her feelings. He changed the subject by observing: "Lady Stubbs is much younger than her husband, is she not?"

"Twenty-three years younger."

"Physically she is very attractive."

Mrs. Folliat said quietly: "Hattie is a dear, good child."

It was not an answer he had expected. Mrs. Folliat went on: "I know her very well, you see. For a short time she was under my care."

"I did not know that."

"How should you? It is in a way a sad story. Her people had estates, sugar estates, in the West Indies. As a result of an earthquake the house there was burned down and her parents and brothers and sisters all lost their lives. Hattie herself was at a convent in Paris, and was thus suddenly left

## Continuing . . . Dead Man's Folly

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without any near relatives. It was considered advisable by the executors that Hattie should be chaperoned and introduced into society after she had spent a certain time abroad. I accepted the charge of her."

Mrs. Folliat added with a dry smile: "I can smarten myself up on occasions and naturally I had the necessary connections—in fact, the late Governor had been a close friend of ours."

"Naturally, Madame, I understand all that."

"It suited me very well—I was going through a difficult time. My husband had died just before the outbreak of war. My eldest son, who was in the Navy, went down with his ship, my younger son, who had been out in Kenya, came back, joined the Commandos, and was killed in Italy. That meant three lots of death duties and this house had to be put up for sale. I myself was very badly off, and I was glad of the distraction of having someone young to look after and travel about with. I became very fond of Hattie, all the more so, perhaps, because I soon realised that she was—shall we say, not fully capable of fending for herself."

She paused briefly. "Understand me, M. Poirot," she went on, "Hattie is not mentally deficient, but she is what country folk describe as 'simple.' She is easily imposed upon, over docile, completely open to suggestion. I think myself that it was a blessing that there was practically no money. If she had been an heiress her position might have been one of much greater difficulty. She was attractive to men, and being of an affectionate nature was easily attracted and influenced—she had definitely to be looked after."

"When, after the final winding up of her parents' estate, it was discovered that the plantation was destroyed and there were more debts than assets, I could only be thankful that a man such as Sir George Stubbs had fallen in love with her and wanted to marry her."

"Possibly—yes—it was a solution."

"Sir George," said Mrs. Folliat, "though he was a self-made man and—let us face it—a completely vulgar man, is kindly and fundamentally decent, besides being extremely wealthy. I don't think he would ever ask for mental companionship from a wife, which is just as well. Hattie is everything he wants. She displays clothes and jewels to perfection, is affectionate and willing, and is completely happy with him. I confess that I am very thankful that that is so, for I admit that I deliberately influenced her to accept him. If it had turned out badly"—her voice faltered a little—"it would have been my fault for urging her to marry a man so many years older than herself. You see, as I told you, Hattie is completely suggestible. Anyone she is with at the time can dominate her."

"It seems to me," said Poirot approvingly, "that you made there a most prudent arrangement for her. I am not, like the English, romantic. To arrange a good marriage one must take more than romance into consideration."

He added: "And as for this place here, Nasse House, it is a most beautiful spot. Quite, as the saying goes, out of this world."

"Since Nasse had to be sold," said Mrs. Folliat, with a faint tremor in her voice, "I am glad that Sir George bought it. It was requisitioned during the war by the Army and afterwards it might have been bought and made into a guest-house or a school, the rooms cut up and partitioned, dis-

torted out of their natural beauty. Our neighbors, the Fletchers, at Hoodown, had to sell their place and it is now a youth hostel. One is glad that young people should enjoy themselves, and fortunately Hoodown is late Victorian so the alterations do not matter."

**R**UEFULLY, she added, "I'm afraid some of the young people trespass on our grounds. It makes Sir George very angry. It's true that they have occasionally damaged the rare shrubs by hacking them about—they come through here trying to get a short-cut to the ferry across the river."

They were standing now by the front gate. The Lodge, a small white one-storied building, lay a little back from the drive with a small railed garden round it.

Mrs. Folliat took back her basket from Poirot with a word of thanks.

"I was always very fond of the Lodge," she said, looking at it affectionately. "Merdle, our head gardener for thirty years, used to live here. I much prefer it to the top cottage, though that has been enlarged and modernised by Sir George. It had to be; we've got quite a young man now as head gardener with a young wife, and these young women must have electric irons and modern cookers and television and all that. One must go with the times—"

She sighed. "There is hardly a person left now on the estate from the old days—all new faces."

"I am glad, Madame," said Poirot, "that you at least have found a haven."

"You know those lines of Spenser's? 'Sleep after toyle, port after stormie seas, ease after war, death after life, doth greatly please . . .'"

She paused and said without any change of tone: "It's a very wicked world, M. Poirot. And there are very wicked people in the world. You probably know that as well as I do. I don't say so before the younger people, it might discourage them, but it's true . . . Yes, it's a very wicked world . . ."

She gave him a little nod, then turned and went into the Lodge. Poirot stood still, staring at the shut door.

After a few moments, being in a mood of exploration, he went through the front gates and down the steeply twisting road that presently emerged on a small quay. A large bell with a chain had a notice upon it: "Ring for the ferry." There were various boats moored by the side of the quay.

A very old man with rheumy eyes, who had been leaning against a bollard came shuffling towards Poirot.

"Du ee want the ferry, sir?" "I thank you, no. I have just come down from Nasse House for a little walk."

"Ah, 'tis up at Nasse you are? Worked there as a boy I did, and my son, he were head gardener there. But I did use to look after the boats. Old Squire Folliat, he was fair mazed about boats. Sail in all weathers, he would. The Major now, his son, he didn't care for sailing. Horses, that's all he cared about. And a pretty packet went on 'em. That and the bottle—had a hard time with him, his wife did. Yu've seen her, maybe—lives at the Lodge now, she du."

"Yes, I have just left her there now."

"Her be a Folliat, tu, second cousin from over Tiverton way. A great one for the garden, she is, all them there flowering

shrubs she had put in. Even when it was took over during the war, and the two young gentlemen was gone to the war, she still looked after they shrubs and kept 'em from being over-run."

"It was hard on her, both her sons being killed."

"Ah, she've had a hard life, she have, what with this and that. Trouble with her husband, and trouble with the young gentleman, tu. Not Mr. Henry. He was as nice a young gentleman as you could wish, took after his grandfather, fond of sailing and went into the Navy as a matter of course, but Mr. James, he caused her a lot of trouble. Debts and women it were, and then, tu, he were real wild in his temper. Born one of they as can't go straight. But the war suited him, as yu might say—give him his chance. Ah! There's many who can't go straight in peace who dies bravely in war."

"So now," said Poirot, "there are no more Folliats at Nasse."

The old man's flow of talk died abruptly.

"Just as yu say, sir."

Poirot looked curiously at the old man.

"Instead you have Sir George Stubbs. What is thought locally of him?"

"Us understands," said the old man, "that he be powerful rich." His tone sounded dry and almost amused.

"And his wife?" "Ah, she's a fine lady from London, she is. No use for gardens, not her. They du say, tu, as her du be wanting up here." He tapped his temple significantly.

"Not as her isn't always very nice spoken and friendly. Just over a year they've been here. Bought the place and had it all done up like new. I remember as though 't were yesterday them arriving. Arrived in the evening, they did, day after the worst gale as I ever remember. Trees down right and left—one down across the drive and us had to get it sawn away in a hurry to get the drive clear for the car. And the big oak up along, that come down and brought a lot of others with it, made a rare mess, it did."

"Ah yes, where the Folly stands now?"

The old man turned aside and spat disgustedly.

"Folly 'tis called and Folly 'tis—new-fangled nonsense—"

Never was no Folly in the old Folliats' time. Her ladyship's idea that Folly was. Put up not three weeks after she first come, and I've no doubt she talked Sir George into it. Rare silly it looks stuck up there among the trees, like a heathen temple. A nice summerhouse now, made rustic like with stained glass—I'd have nothing against that."

Poirot smiled faintly.

"The London ladies," he said, "they must have their fancies. It is sad that the day of the Folliats is over."

"Don't ee never believe that, sir," the old man gave a wheezy chuckle. "Always be Folliats at Nasse."

"But the house belongs to Sir George Stubbs."

"That's as may be—but there's still a Folliat here—Ah! Rare and cunning the Folliats are!"

"What do you mean?"

The old man gave him a sly, sideways glance.

"Mrs. Folliat be living up tu Lodge, bain't she?" he demanded.

"Yes," said Poirot slowly. "Mrs. Folliat is living at the Lodge and the world is very wicked and all the people in it are very wicked."

The old man stared at him. "Ah," he said. "Yu've got something there, maybe."

He shuffled away again.

"But what have I got?" Poirot asked himself with irritation as he slowly walked up the hill back to the house."

Hercule Poirot made a meticulous toilet, applying a scented pomade to his moustaches and twirling them to a ferocious couple of points. He stood back from the mirror and was satisfied by what he saw.

The sound of a gong resounded through the house and he descended the stairs.

The butler, having finished a most artistic performance, crescendo, forte, diminuendo, rallentando, was just replacing the gong stick on its hook. His dark, melancholy face showed pleasure.

Poirot thought to himself: "A blackmailing letter from the housekeeper—or it may be the butler . . ." This butler looked as though blackmailing letters would be well within his scope. Poirot wondered if Mrs. Oliver took her characters from life.

Miss Brewis crossed the hall

in an unbecoming flowered chignon dress and he caught up with her, asking as he did so: "You have a housekeeper here?"

"Oh, no, M. Poirot. I'm afraid one doesn't run to niceties of that kind nowadays, except in a really large establishment, of course. Oh, no, I'm the housekeeper—more housekeeper than secretary, sometimes, in this house."

She gave a short acid laugh. "So you are the housekeeper?" Poirot considered her thoughtfully.

He could not see Miss Brewis writing a blackmailing letter. Now, an anonymous letter—that would be a different thing. He had known anonymous letters written by women not unlike Miss Brewis—solid, dependable women, totally unsuspected by those around them.

"What is your butler's name?" he asked.

"Hendon." Miss Brewis looked a little astonished.

Poirot recollected himself and explained quickly: "I ask because I had a fancy I had seen him somewhere before."

"Very likely," said Miss Brewis. "None of these people ever seem to stay in any place more than four months. They must soon have done the round of all the available situations in England. After all, it's not many people who can afford butlers and cooks nowadays—"

They came into the drawing-room, where Sir George, looking somehow rather unnatural in a dinner-jacket, was proffering sherry. Mrs. Oliver, in iron-grey satin, was looking like an obsolete battleship, and Lady Stubbs' smooth black head was bent down as she studied the fashions in a magazine.

Alec and Peggy Legge were dining, and also Jim Warburton.

"We've a heavy evening ahead of us," he warned them. "No bridge tonight. All hands to the pump. There are any amount of notices to print, and the big card for the fortunetelling. What name shall we have? Madame Zuleika? Esmeralda? Or Romany Leigh, the Gipsy Queen?"

"The Eastern touch," said Peggy. "Everyone in agricultural districts hates gipsies. Zuleika sounds all right. I brought my paint-box over and

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## SPECIAL DRESS SENSE PATTERN By Betty Keep



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# Here's your answer

By LOUISE HUNTER

Broken hearts are youth's greatest unhappiness. Happily though, hearts mend quickly, and once mended, are stronger emotionally than before.

THERE are happy hearts and broken ones in this week's mail bag. Here is the first letter opened:

"I AM 16 and going steady with a boy of 17. We are very much in love. Please don't laugh when I say I love him at such a young age. The other day we had an argument. We made up as usual, but my boy-friend told me that he gets fidgety feet and does not want to go steady. He also said, even though he feels this way, he still loves me more than anything and personally I don't know what I would do without him. Because he loves me he is going to try and go steady. What should I do: let him go and break my heart or hang on and keep trying?"

"Upset," N.S.W.

Let him go and keep him. There is no quicker way to lose him than by the "hang on and keep trying" method. He sounds a sensible boy and deserves applause for telling you he does not want to go steady. At 17, no matter how deep your love, you don't want to tie yourselves up for life.

I cannot imagine how not going steady means that you have to give the boy up. Surely you can still see him. If you hang on to him, anxiously trying to please, you'll soon be unwanted.

Leg-roping generally ends up in a violent emotional kick at the leg-roping, or, at best, resentment that lasts long into my future relationship.

CAROL, VIC.: Dr. Mace gave you your answer in the issue of December 12, 1956.

"I AM nearly 20 and am going with a boy of 21. Nearly two years ago we started going out together; eight or nine months later he told me we would get married in three or four years' time when he had the finance and we were old enough. Now, 14 months later, he tells me he doesn't know whether to get married or stay a bachelor. Recently, when his brother became engaged to a girl his parents never have approved of, there were bitter words in the house. His parents approve of me and often ask me to their place. This boy told me that after the trouble about his brother's engagement he intended to break it off until he saw me, and then changed his mind, but still doesn't know what to do. I still like him, but I feel if he eventually turns me down I will have wasted two years of the best time of my life on him. He has been subject to many colds and flu in the past six months, and I feel this state of mind might be due to his run-down condition. What do you advise me to do?"

"Monica," Vic.

The climate of your love seems to have changed and the outlook looks bleak. Why don't you suggest a 12-month parting so that you may both decide? If 12 months' freedom from one another is completely enjoyable you'll know a parting was wise; if it is not and you are keen to see one another again, everything will be much better.

"I DISAGREE with you about a girl of 16 being too young to go steady with anyone. I am 16 and for the last ten months have been going with a boy of 24. My friends have told me he is too old for me, but I don't think so because we are very happy together. His family and mine are pleased, because they think we are just right for each other. I wouldn't say that every young girl should go steady at 16, but if you find the right man I say stick to him. I know this isn't a problem, so don't expect you to print it, but I do think you should encourage some of these young girls to go with one boy instead of playing the field."

N.M.W., Vic.

Thank you for your letter. It is pleasant to get on without a problem, but I am afraid you haven't convinced me that 16 is too young to go steady. I think that, hard as it sounds, you only get to know whom you really like by trial and error. At 16 you simply haven't had enough time.

Experience is a big factor in deciding whom you like. It helps towards adult poise and maturity. By "experience" I don't mean being fast, going too far, or getting yourself a reputation of being the girl in town who will go out with anyone. I mean experience in making friends, both girls and boys, and learning to be

friends without becoming emotionally involved.

Girls generally become emotionally involved more easily than boys, but they are also quicker at changing their minds about the true love of their life. This is completely natural and normal, but it is another good reason for not going steady at 16.

"WHEN a girl is walking down the street and she meets a boy she knows, who should speak first? Also, at our Youth Club a boy of about 17 continually makes rude remarks to us. How can we make him stop without ignoring him, as it is a small club and to ignore him would be rudeness on our part?"

Two Teenagers, Sydney.

The girl. Etiquette demands that a girl speak first, the theory being that if she doesn't speak to him she does not want to continue her acquaintance with him. The boy at the Youth Club sounds an uncooperative character. I think the only thing for you and your friend to do is to speak to him quietly at the club and tell him that you don't intend to let his behaviour spoil your enjoyment, but, unless he stops, you will have to let everyone know just how rude he is.

"I AM a schoolteacher of 23 and am madly in love with the head boy, who is 18. Should I reveal my feelings for him or forget him?"

"D.D.," W.A.

Forget him; the Christmas holidays will help you. Schoolteachers should keep a schoolteacher's place, which is to educate pupils according to the school curriculum. Lessons in love are not included in this.



## A word from Debbie . . .

HERE'S an easy sweet to serve during the Christmas holidays. It's called Crusty Walnut Sundae and really is lush. Combine 5oz. butter and 1 cup brown sugar. Heat in heavy pan, stirring constantly. Boil for two minutes, add one-quarter cup chopped walnuts and four cups crushed cereal flakes. Coat the cereal flakes quickly and thoroughly and press into greased 7in. sandwich-tin. Chill in refrigerator. Remove the shell from the tin by loosening it carefully with a knife and then dipping the tin in a bowl of warm water. Put the shell on a platter, fill with ice-cream, decorate with half walnuts and crystallised cherries or other fruit.

For a party savory, it would be hard to beat sardine fingers for an easy appetising dish. Divide 8oz. pastry into two and roll each piece to same size and shape. Combine one small tin mashed sardines with one dessertspoon chopped parsley, pinch salt and pepper, and squeeze-of-lemon-juice. Spread over one piece of pastry, press other piece on top. Glaze with melted butter, cut into 3in. x 1in. fingers. Bake in hot oven 10 to 12 minutes.

## Continuing . . . Dead Man's Folly

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I thought Michael could do us a curling snake to ornament the notice."

"Cleopatra rather than Zuleika, then?"

Henden appeared at the door. "Dinner is served, my lady."

They went in. There were candles on the long table. The room was full of shadows.

Warburton and Alec Legge sat on either side of their hosts. Poirot was between Mrs. Oliver and Miss Brewis. The latter was engaged in brisk general conversation about further details of preparation for tomorrow.

Mrs. Oliver sat in brooding abstraction and hardly spoke. When she did at last break her silence, it was with a somewhat contradictory explanation.

"Don't bother about me," she said to Poirot. "I'm just remembering if there's anything I've forgotten."

Sir George laughed heartily. "The fatal flaw, eh?" he remarked.

"That's just it," said Mrs.

## DISC DIGEST

IN that section of my record cupboard labelled "Spoken Word" there's a new tenant, a very forthright fellow who is rubbing shoulders with James Mason, Sir Laurence Olivier, Judith Anderson, Pamela Brown, and Dame Edith Sitwell. He is "The Man From Snowy River" on the microgroove record LLP. 500.

No doubt the Olympics can be thanked for this LP, which contains thirteen of "Banjo" Paterson's best-known bush ballads, and a special thank you goes to the studio concerned for being adventurous enough to launch such a fine recording of Australian.

The poems are read with skill and sincerity by that fine actor Leonard Thiele, who also prepared the informative notes for the album cover. As he points out, the ballads were meant to be spoken, not read silently, and his long experience in radio and the theatre fits him admirably for the task of breathing a new life and vigor into Paterson's work. To play this record is like opening your window and letting the scent of gumleaves into the room, and if you're a city dweller you'll appreciate it all the more.

Thiele sings two songs, "Travelling Down the Castlereagh" and "Waltzing Matilda," the latter being in a version different from the one I know. These lyrics are as Paterson first wrote them, and the tune, which comes from the Nambour district in Queensland, is a transposition of the familiar one. The poems selected contrast sentiment with satire, rough humor with bold narrative.

In addition to the title poem and the songs, you'll hear "Clancy of The Overflow," "Bush Christening," "Last Week," "On Kiley's Run," "Man From Ironbark," "Over the Range," "When Darcy Rode the Mule," and several more. Collectors of Australian folklore won't need to be urged to hear this recording. I think a copy should be in every progressive school, if only to show that a poem on paper is a far different thing from one read with authority and dramatic sense.

—BERNARD FLETCHER.

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Oliver. "There always is one. Sometimes one doesn't realise it until a book's actually in print. And then it's agony!" Her face reflected this emotion. She sighed.

"The curious thing is that most people never notice it. I say to myself, 'But of course the cook would have been bound to notice that two cutlets hadn't been eaten.' But nobody else thinks of it at all."

"You fascinate me," Michael Weyman leant across the table. "The Mystery of the Second Cutlet. Please, please never explain. I shall wonder about it in my bath."

Mrs. Oliver gave him an abstracted smile and relapsed into her preoccupations.

Lady Stubbs was also silent. Now and again she yawned. Warburton, Alec Legge, and Miss Brewis talked across her.

As they came out of the dining-room, Lady Stubbs stopped by the stairs.

"I'm going to bed," she announced. "I'm very sleepy."

"Oh, Lady Stubbs," exclaimed Miss Brewis, "there's so much to be done. We've been counting on you to help us."

"Yes, I know," said Lady Stubbs. "But I'm going to bed."

She spoke with the satisfaction of a small child, then turned her head as Sir George came out of the dining-room.

"I'm tired, George. I'm going to bed. You don't mind?"

He came up to her and patted her on the shoulder affectionately.

"You go and get your beauty sleep, Hattie. Be fresh for tomorrow."

He kissed her lightly and she went up the stairs, waving her hand and calling out: "Good-night, all!"

Sir George smiled up at her. Miss Brewis drew in her breath sharply and turned brusquely away.

"Come along, everybody," she said with a cheerfulness that did not ring true. "We've got to work."

Presently everyone was set to their tasks. Since Miss Brewis could not be everywhere at once, there were soon some defaulter. Michael Weyman ornamented a placard with a ferociously magnificent serpent and the words, "Madame Zuleika will tell your Fortune," and then vanished unobtrusively. Alec Legge did a few nondescript chores and then went out avowedly to measure for the hoop-la and did not reappear. The women, as women do, worked energetically and conscientiously. Hercule Poirot followed his hostess' example and went early to bed.

Poirot came down to breakfast on the following morning at nine-thirty. Breakfast was served in pre-war fashion — a row of hot dishes on an electric heater. Sir George was eating a full-sized Englishman's breakfast of scrambled eggs, bacon, and kidneys. Mrs. Oliver and Miss Brewis had a modified version of the same. Michael Weyman was eating a plateful of cold ham.

Only Lady Stubbs was unheeded of the fleshpots and was nibbling thin toast and sipping black coffee. She was wearing a large pale pink hat which looked odd at the breakfast table.

The post had just arrived. Miss Brewis had an enormous pile of letters in front of her which she was rapidly sorting into piles. Any of Sir George's marked "Personal" she passed over to him. The others she opened herself and sorted into categories.

Lady Stubbs had three letters. She opened what were clearly a couple of bills and

tossed them aside. Then she opened the third letter and said suddenly and clearly: "Oh!"

The exclamation was so startled that all heads turned towards her.

"It's from Etienne," she said. "My cousin Etienne. He's coming here in a yacht."

"Let's see, Hattie." Sir George held out his hand. She passed the letter down the table. He smoothed out the sheet and read.

"Who's this Etienne de Sousa? A cousin, you say?"

"I think so. A second cousin. I do not remember him very well—hardly at all. He was—"

"Yes, my dear?"

She shrugged her shoulders.

"It does not matter. It is all a long time ago. I was a little girl."

"I suppose you wouldn't remember him very well. But we must make him welcome, of course," said Sir George heartily. "Pity in a way it's the fete today, but we'll ask him to dinner. Perhaps we could put him up for a night or two—show him something of the country?"

Sir George was being the hearty country squire. Lady Stubbs said nothing. She stared down into her coffee cup.

Conversation on the inevitable subject of the fete became general. Only Poirot remained detached, watching the slim exotic figure at the head of the table. He wondered just what was going on in her mind.

At that very moment her eyes came up and cast a swift glance along the table to where he sat. It was a look so shrewd and appraising that he was startled. As their eyes met, the shrewd expression vanished—emptiness returned. But that other look had been there, cold, calculating, watchful.

Or had he imagined it? In any case, wasn't it true that people who were slightly mentally deficient very often had a kind of sly, native cunning that sometimes surprised even the people who knew them best?

He thought to himself that Lady Stubbs was certainly an enigma. People seemed to hold diametrically opposite ideas concerning her. Miss Brewis had intimated that Lady Stubbs knew very well what she was doing. Yet Mrs. Oliver definitely thought her half-witted, and Mrs. Folliat, who had known her long and intimately, had spoken of her as someone not quite normal, who needed care and watchfulness.

Miss Brewis was probably prejudiced. She disliked Lady Stubbs for her indolence and her aloofness. Poirot wondered if Miss Brewis had been Sir George's secretary prior to his marriage. If so, she might easily resent the coming of the new regime.

Poirot himself would have agreed wholeheartedly with Mrs. Folliat and Mrs. Oliver—until this morning. And, after all, could he really rely on what had been only a fleeting impression?

Lady Stubbs got up abruptly from the table.

"I have a headache," she said. "I shall go and lie down in my room."

Sir George sprang up anxiously. "My dear girl, you're all right, aren't you?"

"It's just a headache."

"You'll be fit enough for this afternoon, won't you?"

"Yes—I think so."

"Take some aspirin, Lady Stubbs," said Miss Brewis briskly. "Have you got some, or shall I bring it to you?"

"I've got some."

She moved towards the door. As she went she dropped the handkerchief she had been squeezing between her fingers. Poirot, moving quietly forward, picked it up unobtrusively.

Sir George, about to follow

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his wife, was stopped by Miss Brewis.

"About the parking of cars this afternoon, Sir George. I'm just going to give Mitchell instructions. Do you think that the best plan would be, as you said—"

Poirot, going out of the room, heard no more. He caught up his hostess on the stairs. "Madame, you dropped this." He proffered the handkerchief with a bow.

She took it unheeding. "Did I? Thank you."

"I am most distressed, Madame, that you should be suffering. Particularly when your cousin is coming."

She answered quickly, almost violently.

"I don't want to see Etienne. I don't like him. He's bad. He was always bad. I'm afraid of him. He does bad things."

The door of the dining-room opened and Sir George came across the hall and up the stairs.

"Hattie, my poor darling. Let me come and tuck you up."

They went up the stairs together, his arm round her tenderly, his face worried and absorbed. Poirot looked up after them, then turned to encounter Miss Brewis moving fast, and clasping papers.

"Lady Stubbs' headache—" he began.

"No more headache than my foot," said Miss Brewis crossly, and disappeared into her office, closing the door behind her.

Poirot sighed and went out through the front door on to the terrace. Mrs. Masterton had just driven up in a small car and was directing the elevation of a tea marquee, baying out orders in rich, full-blooded tones. She turned to greet Poirot.

"Such a nuisance, these affairs," she observed. "And they will always put everything in the wrong place. No—Rogers! More to the left—left—not right! What do you think of the weather, M. Poirot? Looks doubtful to me. Rain, of course, would spoil everything. And we've had such a fine summer this year for a change. Where's Sir George? I want to talk to him about car parking."

"His wife has a headache and has gone to lie down."

"She'll be all right this afternoon," said Mrs. Masterton confidently. "Likes functions, you know. She'll make a terrific toilet and be as pleased about it as a child. Just fetch me a bundle of those pegs over there, will you? I want to mark the places for the clock-golf numbers."

Poirot, thus pressed into service, was worked by Mrs. Masterton relentlessly as a useful apprentice. She condescended to talk to him in the intervals of hard labor.

"Got to do everything yourself, I find. Only way . . . By the way, you're a friend of the Eliots, I believe?"

Poirot, after his long sojourn in England, comprehended that this was an indication of social recognition. Mrs. Masterton was, in fact, saying: "Although a foreigner, I understand you are one of us." She continued to chat in an intimate manner.

"Nice to have Nasse lived in again. We were all so afraid it was going to be a hotel. You know what it is nowadays; one drives through the country and passes place after place with the board up, 'Guest House' or 'Private Hotel' or 'Hotel AA Fully Licensed.' All the houses one stayed in as a girl—or where one went to dance. Very sad."

She paused briefly, eyeing her handiwork, then went on: "Yes, I'm glad about Nasse and so is poor dear Amy Folliat, of course. She's had such a hard life—but never complains, I will say. Sir George has done wonders for Nasse—and not vulgarised it. Don't know whether that's the result of Amy Folliat's influence—or whether it's his own natural

## Continuing . . . Dead Man's Folly

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good taste. He has got quite good taste, you know. Very surprising in a man like that."

"He is not, I understand, one of the landed gentry," said Poirot cautiously.

"He isn't even really Sir George—was christened it. I understand. Took the idea from Lord George Sangers Circus, I suspect. Very amusing, really. Of course, we never let on. Rich men must be allowed their little snobberies, don't you agree? The funny thing is that in spite of his origins George Stubbs would go down perfectly well anywhere. He's a throwback. Pure type of the eighteenth-century country squire. Good blood in him, I'd say. Father a gent and mother a barmaid, is my guess."

Mrs. Masterton interrupted herself to yell to a gardener. "Not by that rhododendron. You must leave room for the skittles over to the right. Right—not left!"

She went on: "Extraordinary how they can't tell their left from their right. The Brewis woman is efficient. Doesn't like poor Hattie, though. Looks at her sometimes as though she'd like to murder her. So many of these good secretaries are in love with their boss. Now where do you think Jim Warburton can have got to? Silly the way he sticks to calling himself 'Captain.' Not a regular soldier, and never within miles of a German. One has to put up, of course, with what one can get these days—and he's a hard worker—but I feel there's something rather fishy about him. Ah! Here are the Legges."

Peggy Legge, dressed in slacks and a yellow pullover, said brightly: "We've come to help."

"Lots to do," boomed Mrs. Masterton. "Now, let me see"

Poirot, profiting by her inattention, slipped away. As he came round the corner of the house on to the front terrace he became a spectator of a new drama.

Two young women in shorts, with bright blouses, had come out from the wood, and were standing uncertainly looking up at the house. In one of them he thought he recognised the Italian girl of yesterday's lift in the car. From the window of Lady Stubbs' bedroom Sir George leaned out and addressed them wrathfully.

"You're trespassing," he shouted.

"Please?" said the young woman with the green head scarf.

"You can't come through here. Private."

The other young woman, who had a royal-blue head scarf, said brightly: "Please? Nassecombe Quay—" She pronounced it carefully. "It is this way? Please."

"You're trespassing," belated Sir George.

"Please?"

"Trespassing! No way through. You've got to go back. Back! The way you came."

They stared as he gesticulated. Then they consulted together in a flood of foreign speech. Finally, doubtfully, blue-scarf said: "Back? To Hostel?"

"That's right. And you take the road—road—round that way."

They retreated unwillingly. Sir George mopped his brow and looked down at Poirot.

"Spend my time turning people off," he said. "Used to come through the top gate. I've padlocked that. Now they come through the woods, having got over the fence. Think they can get down to the shore and the quay easily this way. Well, they can, of course, much quicker. But there's no right-of-way—never has been. And

they're practically all foreigners—don't understand what you say, and just jabber back at you in Dutch or something."

"Of these, one is French and the other Italian, I think—I saw the Italian girl on her way from the station yesterday."

"Every kind of language they talk—Yes, Hattie? What did you say?" He drew back into the room.

Poirot turned to find Mrs. Oliver and a well-developed girl of fourteen dressed in a Girl Guide's uniform close behind him.

"This is Marlene," said Mrs. Oliver.

Marlene acknowledged the introduction with a pronounced snuffle. Poirot bowed politely.

"She's the Victim," said Mrs. Oliver.

Marlene giggled. "I'm the horrible Corpse," she said. "But I'm not going to have any blood on me." Her tone expressed disappointment.

"No?"

"No. Just strangled with a cord, that's all. I'd of liked to be stabbed—and have lashings of red paint."



"Captain Warburton thought it might look too realistic," said Mrs. Oliver.

"In a murder I think you ought to have blood," said Marlene sulkily. She looked at Poirot with hungry interest. "Seen lots of murders, haven't you? So she says."

"One or two," said Poirot modestly. He observed with alarm that Mrs. Oliver was leaving them.

"Any sex mania?" asked Marlene with avidity.

"Certainly not."

"I like sex mania," said Marlene with relish. "Reading about them, I mean."

"You would probably not like meeting one."

"Oh, I dunno. D'you know what? I believe we've got a sex mania round here. My granddad saw a body in the woods once. He was scared and ran away, and when he came back it was gone. It was a woman's body. But, of course, he's batty, my granddad is, so no one listens to what he says."

Poirot managed to escape, and regaining the house by a circuitous route took refuge in his bedroom. He felt in need of repose.

Lunch was an early and quickly snatched affair of a cold buffet. At two-thirty a minor film star was to open the fete. The weather, after looking ominously like rain, began to improve.

By three o'clock the fete was in full swing. People were paying the admission charge of half-a-crown in large numbers, and cars were lining one side of the long drive. Students from the Youth Hostel arrived in

batches conversing loudly in foreign tongues.

True to Mrs. Masterton's forecast, Lady Stubbs had emerged from her bedroom just before half-past two, dressed very stylishly and most unsuitably in cyclamen-pink, with a large, flower-trimmed hat.

Miss Brewis murmured sardonically: "Thinks it's the Royal Enclosure at Ascot, evidently!"

But Poirot complimented her gravely. "It is a beautiful creation that you have on, Madame."

"It is nice, isn't it," said Hattie happily.

The minor film star was arriving and Hattie moved forward to greet her.

Poirot retreated into the background. He wandered around disconsolately—everything seemed to be proceeding in the normal fashion of fetes. There was a coconut-shy, presided over by Sir George in his heartiest fashion, a skittle-alley and a hoop-la. There were various "stalls" displaying local produce of fruit, vegetables, jams, and cakes—and others displaying "fancy objects." There were "raffles" of cakes, of bas-

a humbler visitor. "Mrs. Knapper, I am pleased to see you. Is this Lucy? How she's grown?"

"She'll be leaving school next year. Pleased to see you looking so well, Ma'am."

"I'm very well, thank you. You must go and try your luck at hoop-la, Lucy. See you in the tea tent later, Mrs. Knapper. I shall be helping with the teas."

An elderly man, presumably Mr. Knapper, said diffidently: "Pleased to have you back at Nasse, Ma'am. Seems like old times."

Mrs. Folliat's response was drowned as two women and a big beefy man rushed towards her.

"Amy, dear, such ages. This looks the greatest success! Do tell me what you've done about the rose garden. Muriel told me that you're restocking it with all the new floribundas."

The beefy man chipped in: "Where's Marilyn Gale—?"

"Reggie's just dying to meet her. He saw her last picture."

"That her in the big hat? My word, that's some get up."

"Don't be stupid, darling. That's Hattie Stubbs. You know, Amy, you really shouldn't let her go around quite so like a mannequin."

"Any?" Another friend claimed attention. "This is Roger, Edward's boy. My dear, so nice to have you back at Nasse."

Poirot moved slowly away and absentmindedly invested a shilling on a ticket that might win him the pig. He heard faintly still, the "So good of you to come" refrain from behind him. He wondered whether Mrs. Folliat realised how completely she had slipped into the role of hostess or whether it was entirely unconscious. She was, very definitely this afternoon, Mrs. Folliat of Nasse House.

He was standing by the tent labelled "Madame Zuleika will tell your fortune for 2/6." Teas had just begun to be served and there was no longer a queue for the fortune-telling. Poirot bowed his head, entered the tent and paid over his half-crown willingly for the privilege of sinking into a chair and resting his aching feet.

Madame Zuleika was wearing flowing black robes, a gold tinsel scarf wound round her head, and a veil across the lower half of her face, which slightly muffled her remarks. A gold bracelet hung with lucky charms tinkled as she took Poirot's hand and gave him a rapid reading, agreeably full of money to come, success with a dark beauty, and a miraculous escape from an accident.

"It is very agreeable all that you tell me, Madame Legge. I only wish that it could come true."

"Oh!" said Peggy. "So you know me, do you?"

"I had advance information—Mrs. Oliver told me that you were originally to be the 'Victim,' but that you had been snatched from her for the Occult."

"I wish I was being the 'Body,'" said Peggy. "Much more peaceful. All Jim Warburton's fault. Is it four o'clock yet? I want my tea. I'm off duty from four to half-past."

"Ten minutes to go, still," said Poirot, consulting his large, old-fashioned watch. "Shall I bring you a cup of tea here?"

"No, no. I want the break. This tent is stifling. Are there a lot of people waiting still?"

"No—I think they are lining up for tea."

"Good."

Poirot emerged from the tent and was immediately challenged by a determined woman and made to pay sixpence and guess the weight of a cake.

A hoop-la stall pressed over by a fat, motherly woman urged him to try his luck, and, much to his discomfort, he immediately won a large kewpie doll. Walking sheepishly along with this, he encountered Michael Weyman, who was standing gloomily on the outskirts near

the top of a path that led down to the quay.

"You seem to have been enjoying yourself, M. Poirot," he said with a sardonic grin.

Poirot contemplated his prize. "It is truly horrible, is it not?" he said sadly.

A small child near him suddenly burst out crying. Poirot stooped swiftly and tucked the doll into the child's arm. The tears ceased abruptly.

"There—Violet—isn't the gentleman kind? Say Ta, ever so—"

"Children's fancy dress," called out Captain Warburton through a megaphone. "The first class—three to five. Form up, please."

Poirot moved towards the house and was cannoned into by a young man who was stepping backwards to take a better aim at a coconut. The young man scowled and Poirot apologised, mechanically, his eye held fascinated by the varied pattern of the young man's shirt. He recognised it as the "turtle" shirt of Sir George's description. Every kind of turtle, tortoise, and sea monster appeared to be writhing and crawling over it.

Poirot blinked and was accosted by the Dutch girl to whom he had given a lift the day before.

"So you have come to the fete," he said. "And your friend?"

"Oh, yes, she, too, comes here this afternoon. I have not seen her yet, but we shall leave together by the bus that goes from the gates at five-fifteen. We go to Torquay, and there I change to another bus for Plymouth. It is convenient."

This explained what had puzzled Poirot, the fact that the Dutch girl was perspiring under the weight of a rucksack.

He said: "I saw your friend this morning."

"Oh, yes, Elsa, a German girl, was with her, and she told me they had tried to get through woods to the river and quay. And the gentleman who owns the house was very angry and made them go back."

She added, turning her head to where Sir George was urging competitors at the coconut-shy, "but now—this afternoon—he is very polite."

Poirot considered explaining that there was a difference between young women who were trespassers and the same young women when they had paid their entrance fee and were legally entitled to sample the delights of Nasse House and its grounds. But Captain Warburton and his megaphone bore down upon him. The captain was looking hot and bothered.

"Have you seen Lady Stubbs, Poirot? Anyone seen Lady Stubbs? She's supposed to be judging this fancy dress business and I can't find her anywhere."

"I saw her, let me see, oh—about half an hour ago. But then I went to have my fortune told."

"Curse the woman," said Warburton angrily. "Where can she have disappeared to? The children are waiting and we're behind schedule as it is." He looked round. "Where's Amanda Brewis?"

Miss Brewis, also, was not in evidence.

"It really is too bad," said Warburton. "One's got to have some co-operation if one's trying to run a show. Where can Hattie be? Perhaps she's gone into the house." He strode off rapidly.

Poirot edged his way towards the roped-off space where teas were being served in a large marquee, but there was a long

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All characters in the serials and short stories which appear in *The Australian Women's Weekly* are fictitious, and have no reference to any living person.

waiting queue and he decided against it.

He inspected the fancy-goods stall, where a determined old lady nearly managed to sell him a plastic collar-box, and finally made his way round the outskirts to a place where he could contemplate the activity from a safe distance. He wondered where Mrs. Oliver was.

Footsteps behind him made him turn his head. A young man was coming up the path from the quay; a very dark young man, faultlessly attired in yachting costume. He paused as though disconcerted by the scene before him. Then he spoke hesitatingly to Poirot.

"You will excuse me. Is this the house of Sir George Stubbs?"

"It is indeed," Poirot paused and then hazarded a guess. "Are you, perhaps, the cousin of Lady Stubbs?"

"I am Etienne de Sousa—"

"My name is Hercule Poirot."

They bowed to each other. Poirot explained the circumstances of the fete. As he finished, Sir George came across the lawn towards them from the coconut-shy.

"De Sousa? Delighted to see you. Hattie got your letter this morning. Where's your yacht?"

"It is moored at Helmmouth. I came up the river to the quay here in my launch."

"We must find Hattie. She's somewhere about . . . You'll dine with us this evening, I hope?"

"You are most kind."

"Can we put you up?"

"That also is most kind, but I will sleep on my yacht. It is easier so."

"Are you staying here long?"

"Two or three days, perhaps. It depends." De Sousa shrugged elegant shoulders.

"Hattie will be delighted, I'm sure," said Sir George politely.

"Where is she? I saw her not long ago." He looked round in

## Continuing . . . Dead Man's Folly

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a perplexed manner. "She ought to be judging the children's fancy dress. I can't understand it. Excuse me a moment. I'll ask Miss Brewis." He hurried off.

De Sousa looked after him. Poirot looked at De Sousa.

"It is some little time since you last saw your cousin?" he asked.

The other shrugged his shoulders.

"I have not seen her since she was fifteen years old. Soon after that she was sent abroad—to school at a convent in France. As a child she promised to have good looks." He looked inquiringly at Poirot.

"She is a beautiful woman," said Poirot.

"And that is her husband? He seems what they call 'a good fellow,' but not perhaps very polished? Still, for Hattie it might be perhaps a little difficult to find a suitable husband."

Poirot remained with a politely inquiring expression on his face. The other laughed.

"Oh, it is no secret. At fifteen Hattie was mentally undeveloped. Feeble-minded, do you not call it? She is still the same?"

"It would seem so—yes," said Poirot cautiously.

De Sousa shrugged his shoulders. "Ah, well! Why should one ask it of women—that they should be intelligent! It is not necessary."

Sir George was back, fuming, Miss Brewis with him, speaking rather breathlessly.

"I've no idea where she is, Sir George. I saw her over by the fortune-teller's tent last. But that was at least twenty minutes or half an hour ago. She's not in the house."

"Is it not possible," asked Poirot, "that she has gone to observe the progress of Mrs. Oliver's murder hunt?"

Sir George's brow cleared. "That's probably it. Look here, I can't leave the shows here. I'm in charge. And Amanda's got her hands full. Could you possibly have a look round, Poirot? You know the course."

But Poirot did not know the course. However, an inquiry of Miss Brewis gave him rough guidance. Miss Brewis took brisk charge of De Sousa, and Poirot went off murmuring to himself, like an incantation: "Tennis court, camellia garden, the Folly, upper nursery garden, boathouse . . ."

As he passed the coconut-shy he was amused to notice Sir George proffering wooden balls with a dazzling smile of welcome to the same young Italian woman whom he had driven off that morning and who was clearly puzzled at his change of attitude.

**P**OIROT went on his way to the tennis court. But there was no one there but an old gentleman fast asleep on a garden seat.

In the camellia garden Poirot found Mrs. Oliver, dressed in purple splendor, sitting on a garden seat in a brooding attitude. She beckoned him to sit beside her.

"This is only the second clue," she hissed. "I think I've made them too difficult. Nobody's come yet."

At this moment a young man in shorts, with a prominent Adam's apple, entered the garden. With a cry of satisfaction he hurried to a tree in one corner, and a further satisfied cry announced his discovery of the next clue. Passing them, he felt impelled to communicate his satisfaction.

"Lots of people don't know about cork trees," he said confidentially. "Clever photographer, the first clue, but I spotted what it was—section of a tennis net. There was a poison bottle, empty, and a cork. Most of 'em will go all out after the bottle clue—I guessed it was a red herring. Very delicate, cork tree, only hardly in this part of the world. I'm interested in rare shrubs and trees. Now where does one go, I wonder?"

He frowned over the entry in the notebook he carried.

"I've copied the next clue, but it doesn't seem to make sense." He eyed them suspiciously. "You competing?"

"Oh, no," said Mrs. Oliver. "We're just—looking on."

"Rightlyho . . . When lovely woman stoops to folly . . . I've an idea I've heard that somewhere."

"It is a well-known quotation," said Poirot.

"A folly can also be a building," said Mrs. Oliver helpfully. "White—with pillars," she added.

"That's an idea! Thanks a lot. They say Mrs. Ariadne Oliver is down here herself somewhere about. I'd like to get her autograph. You haven't seen her about, have you?"

"No," said Mrs. Oliver firmly.

"I'd like to meet her. Good yarns she writes." He lowered his voice. "But they say she drinks like a fish."

He hurried off, and Mrs. Oliver said indignantly:

"Really! That's most unfair when I only like lemonade!"

"And have you not just perpetrated the great unfairness in helping that young man towards the next clue?"

"Considering he's the only one who's got here so far, I thought he ought to be en-

couraged. Sh! Here come some more."

But these were not clue-hunters. They were two women who, having paid for admittance, were determined to get their money's worth by seeing the grounds thoroughly. They were hot and dissatisfied.

"You'd think they'd have some nice flower-beds," said one to the other. "Nothing but trees and more trees. It's not what I call a garden."

Mrs. Oliver nudged Poirot and they slipped quietly away.

"Supposing," said Mrs. Oliver distractedly, "that nobody ever finds my body?"

"Patience, Madame, and courage," said Poirot. "The afternoon is still young."

"That's true," said Mrs. Oliver, brightening. "And it's half-price admission after four-thirty, so probably lots of people will flock in. Let's go and see how that Marlene child is getting on. I don't really trust that girl, you know. No sense of responsibility. I wouldn't put it past her to sneak away quietly, instead of being a corpse, and go and have tea."

They proceeded amicably, passed the Folly and zigzagged down the path to the river.

Poirot remarked that it would be awkward if the murder searches were to light upon the boathouse and find the body by accident.

"A sort of short cut? I thought of that. That's why the last clue is just a key. You can't unlock the door without it. You can only open it from the inside."

A short steep slope led down to the door of the boathouse, which was built out over the river, with a little wharf and a storage place for boats underneath. Mrs. Oliver took a key from a pocket concealed among her purple folds and unlocked the door.

"We've just come to cheer you up, Marlene," she said brightly as she entered. She felt slightly remorseful at her unjust suspicions of Marlene's loyalty, for Marlene, artistically arranged as "the body," was playing her part nobly, sprawled on the floor by the window. She said nothing.

"It's all right," said Mrs. Oliver impatiently. "It's only me and M. Poirot. Nobody's got any distance with the clues yet."

Poirot was frowning. Very gently he pushed Mrs. Oliver aside and went and bent over the girl on the floor. He gave a suppressed cry.

"So—" he said. "That which you expected has happened."

"You don't mean—" Mrs. Oliver's eyes widened in horror. "You can't mean—she isn't dead?"

Poirot nodded. "Oh, yes," he said. "She is dead. Though not very long dead."

"But how?"

He lifted the corner of the gay scarf bound round the girl's head so that Mrs. Oliver could see the ends of the clothesline.

"Just like my murder," said Mrs. Oliver unsteadily. "But who? And why?"

"That is the question," said Poirot.

He forebore to add that those had also been her questions. And that the answers to them could not be her answers, since the victim was not the Yugoslavian first wife of an atom scientist, but Marlene Tucker, a fourteen-year-old village girl, who, as far as was known, had not an enemy in the world.

To be continued

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# Continuing . . . Then We Were Three

from page 11

added, "between Munnie and me, so you won't have to wonder or waste your time."

"Tell me," Martha said. "In the beginning," said Bert, "the tendency is to choose me. Then, after a while, the switch sets in, and Munnie gets the final decision."

"Poor Bert," Martha said, chuckling. "How awful for you. Only winning the opening game of the season all the time. Why are you telling me all this?"

"Because you've got to promise not to choose anybody," Bert said. "And if you do choose, you have to go to the grave with your secret."

"To the grave," Martha repeated solemnly.

"Until the boat sails," Bert said, "we behave like brothers and sister, and that's all. D'accord?" "D'accord," Martha said. "Good." Bert and Munnie nodded at each other, pleased with how reasonable everybody was.

"Rule Number Two," Bert said. "If, after a while, we feel you're a nuisance, we say farewell and you leave. No tears. No scenes. Just a friendly shake of the hand and off you go. D'accord?"

"D'accord two times," Martha said.

"Rule Number Three. Everybody pays exactly one-third of the expenses."

"Of course," said Martha.

"Rule Number Four," Bert went on. "Everybody is free to go wherever he or she wants to, and with whomever he or she pleases, and no questions asked. We are not an inseparable unit, because inseparable units are boring. Okay?"

They all shook hands on it and started out early the next morning, after deciding how to squeeze Martha into Munnie's little car and strap her luggage on to the back, and it couldn't have worked out better. There hadn't been a single argument throughout the summer. And even when Bert had taken out a plump little blond American girl in St. Tropez for a week or so, it had not seemed to disturb Martha for a minute.

The truth was that nothing seemed to disturb Martha much. She greeted the events of each day with a strange and almost dreamlike placidity.

She never wrote any letters and rarely received any, since she hardly ever remembered to leave a forwarding address when they moved. When she needed money she would wire the bank in Paris that handled her allowance, and when it came she spent it carelessly.

When the three of them talked about what they would like to do with their lives she was vaguer than ever. "I don't know," she said, shrugging. "I suppose I'll just hang around. For the moment, I'm on a policy of float. I don't see anybody else of our age doing anything so darned attractive. I'm waiting for a revelation to send me in a permanent direction. I'm in no hurry to commit myself, no hurry at all."

In a curious way Martha's lack of direction made her much more interesting to Munnie than any other girl he had ever known. Martha hadn't made up her mind about anything yet, Munnie felt, because nothing good enough had turned up. And there was always a chance, he believed, that when she finally did commit herself, it would be for something huge, original, and glorious.

The only way in which the plans had not worked out as outlined in Florence had been that, except for the week of the plump blond in St. Tropez, they had been an inseparable unit. But that was only because all three of them enjoyed being with one another better than being with anyone else.

It would not have worked out if Martha had been a different girl, if she had been greedy or foolish, and it would not have

worked if Munnie and Bert had not been such good friends and had not trusted each other so completely — and finally, it would not have worked if they had all been a little older.

But it had worked, at least until the first week of October, and with luck it would continue to work until they kissed Martha goodbye and got on the boat train and started for home.

They lay on the deserted beach until nearly two o'clock and then went for a swim. They had a race, because the water was cold and that was the best way to keep warm. The race was a short one, only about fifty yards, and Munnie was completely out of breath trying to keep up with Martha. Martha won easily and was floating serenely on her back when Munnie came up to her, blowing heavily and fighting to get air into his lungs.

"It would be a different story," Munnie said, grinning, but a little ashamed, "if I didn't have asthma."

"Don't be gloomy about it," Martha said, kicking her legs gently. "Women are naturally more buoyant."

They both turned and watched Bert ploughing doggedly towards them.

"Bert," Martha said as he reached them, "you're the only man I know who looks like an old lady driving an electric motor when he swims."

"My talents," said Bert with dignity, "run in another direction."

They dressed on the beach under the big towel, one after the other. Martha wore jeans and fisherman's jersey striped blue and white. Watching her, Munnie felt that never in his life would he see anything so gay and obscurely touching as Martha dressed in a sailor's striped shirt on a sunny beach, shaking the seawater out of her dark hair.

They decided to have a picnic rather than go to a restaurant for lunch. They got into the little two-seater car, and, with Martha sitting on the cushioned brake in the middle, they went into town and bought a cold chicken and a long loaf of bread and a piece of Gruyere cheese.

They drove all round the harbor to the old fort, which was used now in the summertime as a school to teach young people how to sail. They parked the car and walked out along the broad, bleached top of the sea-wall, carrying the basket and the wine.

The tide was out and the waves rolled in, white and spumy but not ominous, over the slanting, uncovered rocks on which the sea-wall was built.

Munnie suffered a little from vertigo, and when he looked down the sheer sides of the wall into the shifting green depths and the fringe of foam he had a helpless picture of himself plunging down to fight against the tides and the rocks and the waves.

He did not say anything about it, of course, but he was grateful when Martha said, "This is good enough" before they had gone very far, and he carefully helped to weight the towel down as a tablecloth squarely in the middle of the wall.

There was a little wind, capricious and sporadically chilly, but Bert took off his shirt to maintain his tan. Munnie said that the wind was too cold to undress and Bert glanced at him ironically, but he did not say anything.

"Lunch is on," Martha said, as she finished cutting up the chicken.

Munnie drank some of the wine from the bottle, because they had not brought glasses, and broke a piece of bread off the long loaf and took some

of the dark meat. Bert sat on the other side of Martha, folding his long legs down in slow motion. He reached for a piece of chicken and said, as he munched at it:

"Are we really as happy as we feel, or do we only think we're this happy? The philosopher's everlasting cud—illusion or reality. Are we three over-privileged, white-toothed, splendid young voyagers, or are we, without knowing it, pitiful refugees in flight with our backs to the sea? Are we friends and brothers, or will we betray one another by sunset? Search the lady for daggers."

Munnie smiled dreamily in appreciation of Bert's performance. He himself was literal and direct and always said exactly what he meant and no more. But he was entertained by Bert's flights of rhetoric.

Now Bert was sitting waving the wine bottle gently, beaming out at the bay. "Martha," he said, "do you know that you represent a source of vast potential income?"

"I'm going to donate my

fun of himself—"and I don't give a damn. Still, if I'm clever enough and don't rise to the wrong bait, I may go a long way on it. As for Munnie"—he shook his head doubtfully—"his gift is virtue. Poor man. What can he do with that?"

Now, sitting on the corner of the towel, picking the grapes appreciatively off their stems one by one, Bert was shaking his head again. "No," he said, "I won't be one of the invited friends. I'm a permanent fixture. I'm the overseer of the estates, the curious American with no ambition, who likes to live in France."

"I walk around in an old tweed jacket smelling a little of horses, loved by one and all, making wry comments on the state of the world, playing backgammon in front of the fire with the lady of the house when her husband is away..."

"Ah," Martha said, "how idyllic."

"Every age," Bert said gravely, "to its own particular idyll. This is the year between wars."

Munnie felt very uncomfortable, and when he looked over at Martha he felt even more uncomfortable because she was laughing. They had laughed



body to science," Martha said, "at the age of eighty-five."

"The essential thing," said Bert, "is not to marry an American."

"Report that man to a committee," Martha said.

"America is not the place for a pretty woman," Bert went on. "The houses are getting too small, the help too expensive. A beautiful woman does better in a country which is decaying a little and rather uneconomically run — like France. You could marry a nice, forty-five-year-old man with a small moustache and large, rolling feudal estates on the banks of the Loire."

"Your husband would adore you and invite all your friends down to keep you happy, and he'd leave you on your own a good deal of the time when he went to Paris to attend to his affairs and have his doctor probe his liver."

"Where do you fit into this picture?" Martha asked.

"He'd be one of the friends invited to keep you happy," Munnie said.

He wasn't enjoying the conversation. Even though Bert was joking, Munnie knew that actually Bert would approve if Martha did go out and marry an old man with a lot of money.

Only the other day, when they had been talking about the careers that might lie ahead of them, Bert had said: "The important thing is to recognise your gift and then use it. And the best way to use it is to keep you from the insufferable boredom of work. Now your gift?"—he had grinned at Martha—"your gift is beauty. That's easy. You use it on a man and the sky's the limit."

"My gift is a double one, but in the long run less hopeful. I have charm"—he grinned more widely, making

together at a lot of things since Florence, and they had covered practically every subject, but Munnie did not want to hear Martha laughing now at this.

He stood up. "I think I'm going down the wall a little way," he said, "to take a siesta. Wake me when you want to go."

He walked about thirty yards, carrying a sweater to use as a pillow, and as he stretched out on the smooth, sun-warmed stone he heard Martha and Bert laughing together, the laughter private and small in the wide, bright emptiness.

Closing his eyes against the glare of the sun, Munnie realised he was in pain. The pain was not localised, and it had a curious, evasive quality. Just when Munnie felt, There, I've got it, it's in my throat—it slipped away, not to disappear but to put vague, sharp, almost detectable fingers somewhere else. Then, lying there with the curtain of heat on his eyelids, Munnie understood that what he was feeling was not pain but sorrow.

The sorrow was deep and complex and was composed of many elements—a sense of deprivation, a shadow of impending departure, a nostalgia for memories that were moving irrevocably away from innocence, a confusion of emotion more profound than anything he had ever experienced before in his life.

Engulfed and shaken as he was, Munnie also knew that if, telepathically affected, Martha were to stop laughing with Bert and to get up and walk the thirty yards along the wall to where he lay, and if she were to sit down beside him and touch his hand, all would instantly be well.

But she did not move, and he heard her laugh more loudly at something that Bert had said.

Suddenly Munnie knew what he was going to do. As soon as he was on the boat and all bargains were over, all rules no longer in effect, he was going to write to Martha to ask her to marry him. Clumsily, he began to compose the letter in his mind.

"This will come as a surprise to you, I suppose, because all summer long I never said a word, but I didn't realise for a long time what had been happening to me, and, besides, there was the arrangement you and Bert and I made in Florence to keep everything on a purely friendly basis. But now I'm on the boat and I feel free to tell you how I feel about you. I love you and I want to marry you. I am going to get a job and get settled as soon as I get home, and then you could come back and meet my family and all..."

The letter stopped writing itself inside his head. He thought of his mother sitting down having tea with Martha, saying: "You say your mother lives in Philadelphia? And your father...? Oh... Do try one of these cakes. And you say you met Munnie in Florence and then just you and he and Bert went all round Europe for the rest of the summer all together...? Lemon, cream."

Munnie shook his head. He'd handle his mother when the time came. He went back to writing the letter.

"You said once that you didn't know what you wanted to do with yourself, that you were waiting for some kind of revelation to send you in a permanent direction. Maybe you'll laugh at me for offering myself as a revelation, but maybe you'll feel that marrying me will—"

Munnie shook his head disgustedly. Goodness, even if she were madly in love with him, he thought, a sentence like that would finish it for ever.

"I don't know about you and other men," he went on jumpy in his head. "You never seemed interested in anybody else while you were with us, and you never mentioned anybody else in any particular way and, as far as I could tell, you never showed any preference between Bert and me..."

Munnie opened his eyes and turned his head to look at Bert and Martha. They were sitting close together, almost head to head, facing each other, talking in low, serious voices.

He remembered Bert's description of what he called his gift—"I have charm and I don't give a damn." Well, Munnie thought with satisfaction, that can't have attracted her so much. And besides, there was that blond in St. Tropez.

If Bert had intended to do anything about Martha, or if Martha, as Bert had predicted, were interested in making a choice, that certainly would have put an end to it, wouldn't it? Bert, Munnie decided, could be the amusing bachelor friend of the family.

Munnie dozed a little, a succession of warm and delicious images pouring through his mind. Martha coming off the aeroplane at Idelwild and walking up the runway into his arms. Martha coming into a party on his arm and a slight, approving, envious, subtle hush sweeping the room for a moment because she was so beautiful. Martha...

Someone was shouting. Far off, someone was shouting.

Munnie opened his eyes and blinked.

The cry came again, and Munnie stood up and looked out at the bay. In the water, at least three hundred yards

away, was a small boat. It had capsized and there were two figures clinging to it. As he watched, he heard the cry again.

Munnie turned and looked towards Bert and Martha. They were stretched out, their heads together, on the towel—their bodies made a wide V—sleeping.

"Bert!" Munnie called. "Martha! Get up!"

Bert stirred, then sat up, rubbing his eyes. The shout came again from the bay.

"Out there," Munnie said, pointing. Bert swung round, still sitting, and looked at the capsized boat and the two almost submerged figures clinging to it, a man and a woman. "Good heavens!" Bert said. "What do they think they're doing?" He nudged Martha. "Wake up," he said, "and watch the shipwreck."

The boat lay almost motionless in the water, only shifting a little as the two figures moved, changing their positions. As Munnie watched, he saw the man push off from the boat and start to swim towards the beach. He swam slowly and every thirty seconds he stopped and shouted and waved. After each stop he slid under, then reappeared, splashing and frantic.

"Oh, my!" Bert said. "He's leaving her out there!"

The man had a good three hundred yards to go before he could touch the bottom, and with his screaming and waving and going under twice a minute, it did not look as if he were going to make it.

The woman, who had been left hanging on to the boat, shouted from time to time, too, her voice shrill and angry as it floated across the water.

Finally, Munnie could make out what the swimmer was shouting. "Au secours! Je me noie, je me noie!" Munnie felt a little flicker of annoyance within him. It seemed melodramatic and overdone to be shouting: "To the rescue! I'm drowning!" especially on such a peaceful afternoon, in the calm, sunny bay. He went over to Bert and Martha.

"He seems to be doing all right," Bert said. "He's got a nice strong stroke there."

"He's going to have to do a little explaining later," Martha said, "leaving his girl-friend out there like that."

As they watched, the man went under again. He seemed to stay under a long time and Munnie began to feel his mouth getting very dry, watching the spot where the man disappeared. Then the man surfaced and shouted again. By now it was obvious that he was calling to the three of them.

Munnie scanned the beach and wharf on which the sailing-boats were put up on blocks for the winter. There was not a boat of any kind he could use, nor even a length of rope. Far across, on the other side of the bay, there was no movement in front of the houses that faced the water.

The entire world of stone, sand, and sea that afternoon seemed to be divided among the three of them standing on the wall, the woman clinging to the bottom of the capsized boat calling shrilly and angrily, and the man struggling in the water.

Munnie looked almost embarrassed across at Martha and Bert. Martha was squinting, and there were lines on her forehead. She was biting her thumbnail absently, like a little girl puzzling over a problem at school. Bert seemed critical and mildly interested, as if he were watching an acrobat in a third-rate circus.

"The fool," Bert said mildly. "If he couldn't handle a boat any better than that, you'd think he'd have had the sense to stick close to the shore."

The man called again. "What are we going to do?" Munnie asked.

"Tick him off," Bert said.

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"when he comes ashore, for being such a rotten sailor."

Munnie peered at the swimmer. He was going more slowly now and seemed to be settling deeper in the water after each stroke. "I don't think he's going to make it," Munnie said.

"Well," said Bert, "that'll be too bad."

Martha said nothing. Munnie swallowed dryly. Later on, he thought, I won't be able to bear remembering today. Standing here, watching a man drown.

Then another picture flicked before his eyes. It was sharp and clear and there was nothing missing. It was of Bert and Martha and himself standing in front of a French policeman.

"So," the policeman was saying. "You wish to report a drowning?"

"Yes."

"So you saw this gentleman, some distance from the shore, waving to you, and then he disappeared?"

"Yes."

"And the lady?"

"The last we saw of her she was still holding on to the boat, floating out to sea."

"Ah. And—uh—what steps did you take personally?"

"We—we came here and reported it."

"Oh, yes. Of course." A hand reaching out. "Your passports, please." A quick riffling through the pages and one short, cold, smiling glance. "Ah, Americans."

Munnie tried to swallow again. This time he couldn't manage it. "I'm going to go and get him," he said.

"It's two hundred and fifty yards at least from the beach," Bert said very calmly. "And then two hundred and fifty yards back with a mad Frenchman holding on to your neck."

Munnie listened gratefully. "Yes," he said. "At least."

"You've never swum five hundred yards in your life," Bert said, sounding friendly and reasonable.

The man screamed again. Munnie started walking swiftly along the wall, back to where there was a narrow flight of steps leading down to the beach. He didn't run because

he didn't want to be out of breath when he went into the water.

"Munnie!" he heard Bert call. "Don't be a fool!"

Even as he started down the steep flight of steps, slippery with moss, Munnie noticed that Martha hadn't said anything.

When he got down to the beach he trotted across it, at the waterline, to get to the point nearest the man. Now, at water level, it looked a good deal more than two hundred and fifty yards.

He kicked off his shoes and tore off his shirt. The wind felt cold on his skin. He took off his trousers, tossing them to one side on the sand, and stood there in his underpants. As he walked deliberately into the water he scraped his toes on a rock and the pain made the tears come to his eyes.

He kept walking until the water was up to his chest, then pushed off and began to swim. The water was cold and his skin felt tight and frozen almost at once. He tried not to swim too fast, so that he would have some strength left when he reached the drowning man.

Whenever he looked up to see how far he'd gone, it seemed to him that he had hardly moved at all, and it was hard to keep going in a straight line; he seemed to be veering to his left.

Once he looked up at the wall, searching for Bert and Martha. He couldn't see them and he had a moment of panic. What have they done? he thought. They've left! He turned over on his back, losing precious seconds, and saw them, standing at the water's edge.

He turned over and kept on swimming methodically towards the Frenchman. Whenever he lifted his head out of the water it seemed to him the Frenchman was just as far away as ever.

The back of his neck and the base of his skull started to ache, and his arms began to feel numb. And he rolled more and more, in an effort to get his shoulders into the job, and he seemed to be swimming lower in the water than he had ever done before.

There's no sense in wasting time, he thought, making himself worry about something else besides his arms—I might as well decide what to do once I get there.

Dimly, he remembered having seen a demonstration of life-saving at a pool when he was fourteen. He had not paid much attention, because the boy behind him had surreptitiously kept flicking a wet towel at him.

But there was something about letting yourself sink if the drowning man put his arms around your neck, then twisting and putting your hand under his chin and pushing back.

Then there were all the stories about grabbing people by the hair, hitting them on the chin, and knocking them out. He had never knocked anybody out in his whole life.

He swam heavily and slowly, his eyes beginning to smart with the salt water. Fifty strokes more, he decided, then he'd stop and look around.

He started to count the strokes. Fourteen, fifteen, sixteen. Lord, he thought, what if he's bald? By the time he got to thirty-five he knew he would have to stop for a while. Gasping, he treaded water, searching for the Frenchman. The Frenchman wasn't there. Oh, God, he thought, he's gone down.

Then he heard the chugging and twisted in the water. A fishing boat was bearing away from the spot where Munnie had last seen the Frenchman and was going towards the overturned dory. Munnie watched while the tuna boat stopped and two fishermen reached down and pulled the woman aboard. The tuna boat, Munnie realised, must have been coming up from the south, concealed by the headland on which the fort was built, and entered the channel while he was swimming blindly out from the beach.

The men on the tuna boat threw a line on to the dory, then swung around and headed

## Then We Were Three

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for Munnie. He waited for it, fighting his lungs. The tuna boat, slow and old, approached him, looking very big and safe as it drew nearer. Munnie waved, with great effort, as it slowed down and came to a stop next to him.

"Ca va?" a fisherman shouted, grinning down at him. Munnie managed a smile. "Ca va bien," he called back.

The man who had been rescued came to the rail and peered curiously down at Munnie. Munnie saw that he had plenty of hair. He was a fat young man with a hurt and dignified expression on his face.

At his side appeared a woman. She had been heavily made up and sea-water had done a great deal of damage to the rouge and mascara. She stared furiously down at Munnie, then turned to the Frenchman, and grabbed him by both ears and shook him.

The Frenchman closed his eyes and allowed his head to be shaken, keeping his face sad and dignified. The fisherman, grinning broadly, threw a line out towards Munnie.

Munnie looked longingly at the line. Then he shook his head. One thing that was not going to happen to him that afternoon was to be fished out of the sea half-naked in front of that woman pulling her friend's ears. "I'm okay," Munnie said. "Je suis okay. I want to swim."

"Okay, okay," the fisherman said, laughing as if what he had said were enormously witty. They pulled in the line and waved and the tuna boat swung around and started in towards the harbor, towing the dory.

Well, Munnie thought, watching the boat sail off, at least they understood me. Then he turned and looked at the beach. It looked miles away and Munnie was surprised that he had swum so far. On the beach, at the waterline, Bert and Martha were standing, small, sharp figures throwing long shadows now in the declining sun.

Taking a deep breath, Munnie started to swim in.

He had to turn over and float every so often, and for a while it seemed to him that he was not moving at all, only going through the motions of swimming, but finally, putting his feet down, he touched bottom. It was still fairly deep, up to his chin, and he pulled his feet up and stubbornly kept on swimming.

And as a gesture which he did not try to understand, even as he did it, he swam all the way in, making himself spurt and do a proper crawl until the water was so shallow that his finger-tips scraped the sand.

Then he stood up. He wavered a little, but he stood up and, making himself smile, walked slowly to where Bert and Martha stood next to the pile of his clothes on the beach.

"Well, hero," Bert said as Munnie came up to them, and the expression on his face was negligent, amused, hostile. "When we get back to the hotel, remind me to put you in for the Legion of Honor, with seaweed cluster."

As he bent over and picked up the towel, Munnie heard Martha laugh. It was the same laugh that had made him move away from them on the seawall after lunch, only this time Munnie knew it was going to move him more than thirty yards—a good deal more than thirty yards.

They drove back to the hotel in silence, and when Munnie said he thought he'd lie down and try to rest for a while, they both agreed that it was probably the best thing to do.

When Bert came in and said it was time for dinner, Munnie told him he wasn't hungry. "We're going to the Casino after dinner," Bert said. "Should we stop by and pick you up?"

"No," Munnie said. "I don't feel lucky tonight."

There was a little silence in the darkened room. Then Bert said: "Sleep well, Fat Man," and went out.

Alone, Munnie lay staring at the shadowed ceiling, think-

ing, I'm not fat—why does he call me that? He only started it in the middle of the summer.

When he awoke, he felt better. He turned on the lamp and looked at Bert's bed. It was empty. He looked at his watch. It was four-thirty.

He got out of bed and lit a cigarette and went to the window. The moon was just going down and the sea was milky and making an even, grumbling sound, like an old man complaining about the life that lay behind him.

For a moment he wondered where he would have been at this hour if the tuna boat hadn't come in around the breakwater. Then he doused his cigarette and began to pack. It did not take long, because they had been travelling light all the summer.

When he had finished, he made sure the extra key for the car was on his ring. Then he wrote a short note to Bert, telling him that he was going to try to get to Paris in time to catch the boat. He hoped this would not inconvenience Bert too much and he knew that Bert would understand. He did not mention Martha.

He carried his bag out to the car through the dark hotel. He put on a raincoat and a pair of gloves and drove carefully out of the drive without looking back to see whether the sound of the motor had awakened anyone, or whether anyone had come to a window to watch him leave.

There was mist in the low places on the road and he drove slowly, feeling it wet against his face. With the sighing, regular noise of the windshield wipers and the steady, damp light of the headlights on the road ahead of him almost hypnotising him, he drove mechanically, not thinking of anything at all.

It was only far past Bayonne, when dawn had broken, that he allowed himself to remember the day and night that had just passed. And then, all he could think was: It's my fault. I let the summer go on for one day too long.

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THE AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S WEEKLY — December 26, 1956



# FAST TRAIN TO NEW YORK

By CHARLOTTE  
EDWARDS

**A**FTER I left the dining-car that Friday noon on the Super Chief, I went to my roomette. I'd taken one of the little yellow pills the doctor said to use if the swaying of the train bothered me, and it made me drowsy.

However, I couldn't go to sleep. So I opened my brief-case and looked over my notes again. The folded square of white paper that I'd absently picked up in the observation car bent over on itself and made a page stick up.

I opened it, thinking it was mine, some quick little note I'd written and tucked into the brief-case and forgotten. I stared at the typewritten words completely without interest at first. Then I squeezed the paper with tense fingers and leaned closer.

"To Whom It May Concern: Strange, it concerns nobody and everybody. Nobody in particular in the whole world. Anybody who knows what it is to be lonely. To live in the middle of a circle of people and walk alone. Alone. It's a word that has pounded in my brain for too long now. I am a simple soul. I need love. What love I have had I've lost. I'm too tired to try to find it again.

"So to you, then, because I must tell somebody and it might as well be you, I am going to kill myself. It looks impersonal, doesn't it? Already accomplished, typed out that way. I am going to kill myself."

*Continued overleaf*



# "FAST TRAIN TO NEW YORK," by Charlotte Edwards

By the time I finished the last sharp sentence, my heart was pounding as heavily as the word "alone" must have pounded in the mind of the writer. I read the note over again, trying to tell myself that in some far night, half-asleep, I'd dreamed a weird story idea, stumbled to the typewriter, dashed off these words, and gone back to sleep again, forgetting the incident.

I didn't succeed. I knew it wasn't so. This slip was dropped deliberately by one of the people in the same car as I was. Because nobody else had been in the observation car. I was sure of that. Not last night. Nor this morning.

How do you go about preventing a suicide in a crowded train, where each bedroom, each roomette has a solid locked door behind its curtains? How do you stop somebody from taking his or her life when you don't even know who that somebody is?

I stood up abruptly, spilling everything in the brief-case except the slip I held. I'd go find Grady Oliver. He was a man, a sensible-looking man, even if he drank too much. He'd know what to do.

I was half-way down the aisle before I thought, maybe it's Grady Oliver himself. How do you know?

I went back to my roomette and sat down.

I began to go over the part of the story that was my own, that I knew.

It was a big deal from the beginning. Maybe not for some people, the sort who flit around the world and back and find it a small place after all. Maybe not for some writers,

who take an African safari as anybody else would take a walk to the supermarket.

I'm not that kind of person, that kind of writer. I'm a homebody. I write in between, as I can, when I can. I don't need to go anywhere, really. I don't write about lions, or Paris, or Down Under. I write about people. They're all around me, always.

When the letter had come I'd burst into tears. I was tired anyhow with nursing the boy through chickenpox and being a Den Mother.

"I won't go!" I cried to Bruce. "They can't make me."

He patted my shoulder. "Of course they can't," he said in that terribly reasonable tone. "But they've got a point."

"How could I possibly leave Jake?"

Bruce gave a wry grin. "How can you possibly leave me?" He bit his lower lip. "You can leave him," he stated flatly. "It's time you did, as a matter of fact."

I didn't go into that statement. I seldom follow through when Bruce bites his lower lip.

The letter from my agent said, in part: "You've had a mild success. But we all feel here that if you'll come on East and have some story conferences, that success can be pumped up pretty big."

I dragged my feet and went around with a lump in my throat. I covered up the boy every night, and couldn't imagine being three thousand miles away from lifting his sleeping head and smoothing a fresh place for it to rest.

The time came at last, of course.

I leaned over the bed with considerable yearning, tucking in the blankets. I showed Jake the box with the little presents in it, one for each night. He wanted to open them immediately. The argument which followed took some of the dull, dead feeling away from my heart.

Then Bruce stuck his head in the door. "Come on, Annie. We've got to get going."

I kissed the boy again. He protested. "Let's not overdo this, Mom."

Jake is eight. Part man. Big for his age. I had never slept under a different roof from him since the day he was born.

"Okay," I said, answering both of them.

I checked with the woman who was going to take care of them and went out the back door. Bruce had the bags in the car. He started the motor and backed out into the alley.

Over the sound of the gunning engine I heard a cry. I said, "Stop, Bruce."

He did and I rolled down my window. Jake stood at the back door with one arm lifted. "I love you," he called.

It had echoes. It went all around the empty backyard, the dark night.

"I love you, too," I cried, swallowing against the sudden tightening in my throat. "Two weeks isn't long."

Bruce zoomed out of the alley. I refused to let the pushing tears reach my lids. I'd put on a lot of mascara. Funny, that sort of thing works.

We rode across town and picked up our two best friends. Jean's face was tender.

"How did he take it?"

"He was wonderful." The tears got very insistent.

You can't help it. You see a small figure with a raised hand silhouetted against the kitchen light. You hear the small, clear voice admitting your importance, admitting the love you've fostered. And three thousand miles is a heck of a lot of territory and anything can happen. Jake falls down a dozen times a day; arithmetic is hard for him; and what if his throat started acting up again?

Milt and Jean did most of the talking on the way down. The Super Chief doesn't stop in our town. We have to drive to San Bernardino, where it halts for five minutes.

We swung up at the station. Inside, the big clock made a big noise in the sleepy place. A phone booth was to the right of it. The clock said thirty-two minutes until train time.

"Where are you going?" Bruce called after me.

I didn't answer. I rang long-distance. I got the number. The woman's voice sounded calm.

"Everything all right?" I asked.

"Sure, Mrs. Dean. He's reading a comic book, half asleep. Go along now. We'll be fine."

"Sure," I said. "Sure." I wanted to ask to speak to Jake, but I was afraid it would disturb the peace. "So long."

Bruce, Jean, and Milt sat relaxed and easy. Jean's laugh raced out. They didn't have to go any place, except back home. Safe in four walls.

I went back and sat down. Bruce patted my shoulder. He didn't quite look at me. It had been a while since he had. I planned to think about that, too, on the train.

The trip, I decided, shouldn't seem long if I thought about all the things I planned to do.

I said, "Bruce, you'll get home early every night."

He put his hand over mine. It felt broad and warm.

"I'll take good care of him." He looked at me then. He seemed strange. Almost as if some of those three thousand miles were already between us.

"And of yourself, too, of course."

He nodded. "Of course."

I got up. "Let's go outside."

We walked out of the station. The night was clear, though this was the foggy season. The air was sweet with oranges.

"You're in for a change of climate," Milt offered. Milt is a great one to talk about the weather.

I couldn't keep my eyes away from Bruce. He looked the same as always. Medium tall, medium blond, nice smile, quiet. The kind you ask a question and while he thinks it over there's a long bubble of silence until finally he pierces it with a considered answer. It's usually a good answer, too. Although to an intense woman it can be a nervous wait.

Not as nervous, though, as this wait for the Super Chief.

I LOOKED up the track. A red light turned green.

"Bruce," I said fast. "I'll write every day. Put him to bed yourself, will you? He makes an occasion."

He smiled. His lips looked tight around his teeth.

I watched a great white eye grow bigger, and the sound of wheels was thunder coming up the valley.

Jean kissed me on the cheek. "I'll take him to school every day," she promised.

Milt shook my hand. "Don't take any wooden nickels."

The train was long and silver. A porter let down some steps and reached for the bags. Bruce kissed me. I didn't feel it. Either I was numb or it was that kind of kiss.

I followed the porter up the steps and down an aisle. "Roomette six, ma'am," he said.

I went in, directly to the window, and pulled up the shade.

They stood there, my best friends and my husband. There was a strange light on their faces, eerie and remote. Bruce looked very tired.

After a preliminary jerk, a preliminary noise, the Super Chief started to move, slowly down the track.

"Bruce!" I cried. He seemed rigid and tense out there, not even his hand up, just his eyes reaching. "I love you," I mouthed. I knew how the boy

had felt in the kitchen door. I pressed against the glass. His lips were still. All of him was still.

Then we were really moving. The silver car behind mine, the last one, shut off the three of them. The night blurred outside the window like stripes of slanted rain. For a spaceless counting there was nothing but the night's movement.

My hands were on the window-sill, hanging on tight. I felt the struggle and the pull and push of the train floor beneath my feet as the long line of cars, propelled by the back engine and tugged by the front one, lifted itself up through the opening canyons of the mountains.

Dimly now I looked out the window, seeing first the reflection of my own face, ghostly and wavering, and through it the high banks that told of our ascent.

Only my clinging hands on the window-sill were close and clear or had reality. They were frozen there, clutching towards the place where they had come from.

The porter's voice slipped silkily into my thoughts. "I just put the big bag up here, ma'am."

My hands let go as if I had been rapped across the knuckles. I turned around easily, the spell broken, the bonds loosened.

"Thank you," I smiled at him. "What's your name?"

He smiled back broadly. "Plagus, ma'am." He kept it soft.

I was suddenly aware of the car full of sleeping people.

"Well, thank you, Plagus."

He nodded, still grinning. "There anything you want, Mrs. Dean, anything whatsoever, you push that there button."

"I will."

"You get yourself a good night, now. All's aboard that's coming aboard. Two in L.A. Mr. Oliver, he snoring through the walls." The grin repeated. "Never take more than three Martinis at the Biltmore, he tell me."

"Are there many people in our car?"

He held up a pudgy finger. "Miss Hubbins, she on at L.A. too. Look scared out of her wits. Four gets on at Pasadena. Rich daddy and daughter AND—" he managed to capitalise the conjunction—"Sonya Abbott and Tag Bailey."

"I thought of Jean, who read all the movie magazines and who would jump with excitement if she were here."

"Nobody else pound down this aisle tonight." He smiled his way out and rustled off.

So now my back was towards the window. I was facing away from the night, away from California.

Suddenly a strange thing happened. Suddenly and with the greatest amazement I found that in one swinging motion of my body I had turned my back on Bruce and my friends and the boy.

I found that for the first time in ten years my mind stretched forward eagerly, as if it were running, young and unencumbered and new, to a waiting future.

When I was in bed I couldn't wait until morning when those sleeping people woke. Those strangers, who needn't be strangers long, who could be watched and listened to, each one of whom carried with him the cloud of emotion, thought, and action, the life which he had lived.

In the morning when I heard Plagus' voice outside, the demure tinkle of his announcing breakfast bell, I picked up my purse and headed towards coffee. It was a long walk, a lurching one. I was breathless at the first platform to discover that it was cold outside, the sort of blowing chill I hadn't felt in ten years.

The dining-car was too hot and already crowded. The steward ushered me to a seat opposite two people. I kept my eyes down until I ordered, then I pushed back the slip and looked up.

Even before coffee my mind felt sharp, alert, curious, as it hadn't for a long time.

The man across from me was enormous, pulpy, even to the overflow of his chins and the lax fatness of his lower lip. His huge shoulders were bent towards his girl companion. His great hooked nose stood out, bony and independent, in the mist of the softness of his face.

I noticed first the mink that oozed over the back of the girl's chair. Then I looked at her eyes. They stared straight ahead, set close on either side of the hooked nose. Like his, so exactly like his. Her mouth was tight, pinched close under the nose, pulling her long, flat cheeks down.

The man said, "Dollie, here we go. Europe, here we come. Britain, France, Switzerland."

Her mouth twisted bitterly. "So what?"

She was a mean one, I thought as my eyes met hers.



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## Adam and Eve



Contributions are invited for our Adam and Eve Contest, in which each week we award £2/2/- for the most amusing accounts of typically male and female behaviour. Here are this week's winners.

### JUST LIKE A MAN

OUT with hubby one day, a trim young girl passed by, and hubby remarked:

"What an attractive way to wear a scarf."

When I adopted the same idea the following day, he said:

"What's the matter, dear? Got a sore throat?"

£2/2/- awarded to Mrs. B. McCormack, 13 Fletcher Street, Adamstown, Newcastle, N.S.W.

### JUST LIKE A WOMAN

MY father and I were sitting in the car waiting for my mother. We had planned a day in the bush, wood-cutting. When mother finally arrived, father asked her if the lunch was in the boot.

"Oh yes," she replied, "and I put some wood in, too, so that we could make a billy of tea."

£2/2/- awarded to Miss J. Wilson, 269 Elizabeth Street, Hobart.

Send your entries to "Just Like A Man" or "Just Like A Woman," The Australian Women's Weekly, Box 4088, G.P.O., Sydney.

# "FAST TRAIN TO NEW YORK," by Charlotte Edwards

(ADVERTISEMENT)

## HOLIDAY LOVELINESS

By  
MARGARET MERRILL

You are spending your holiday far away from the maddening crowds; amongst the beauty of the mountains, the quiet of a deserted beach, or in the peace of your own garden. Here is a suggestion. Spend a few days without make-up on and see just how much good it does your complexion.

When I say no make-up, however, I do not mean spend your holiday looking faded and colourless. Don't put away your lipstick and eye-make-up, as eyes and lips lose their colour more quickly against a sun-tan than against any other type of skin colouring. A little brilliantine smoothed over your lips and eyelids when they have been made-up will add glamour.

Protect your face against wrinkles on days when you forsake your make-up box and massage a film of oil of ulan over your face, working it upwards and outwards; while you holiday, your oil of ulan will be at work protecting your skin against the sun and feeding the delicate skin tissues with its natural oil gentleness.

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"Would anybody knowing the whereabouts of Robert Norman Sturt Shields please ask him to communicate with The Union Trustee Company of Australia Ltd., 333 Collins Street, Melbourne."

They were cold eyes that pushed my own glance back to the coffee-pot the steward set before me.

She lifted a hand towards the man. "Cigarette," she snapped. "Of course, Dollie." He shuffled through his pockets and came up with a slim gold case.

I listened because I had to. "Your eggs are cold," he murmured. "I'll get you fresh." He snapped his fingers at the steward.

"I don't want any more." "But, Dollie, just a little bit of breakfast? To please Daddy?"

"No, I said." He put his mouth to her ear. Even so, I could hear his whisper: "What is it, Dollie? Tell me."

"All the way to New York with those movie people." She didn't try to match his secrecy. "Vulgar, loud, common—"

"She's mighty pretty," the man said. Then he looked as if he could have bitten off his tongue.

"If you like the 'sexy kind'—" She lifted her head, crying sharply. "Are you going to stand there all day gawping?"

I looked guiltily at the tablecloth and felt hot all over.

"Sorry, sorry," the voice of the steward muttered above me.

"More coffee," the girl ordered. "Before the movie colony takes all of your attention. And make it hot this time."

"Now, Sandra," the man murmured.

The steward hurried away. There was silence across from me.

The country was flat and grey. Two adobe houses became dun blurs. I drank my coffee fast, feeling an intruder at the weird conversation. The man's humility. The girl's snarls. I tipped more than I should, foolishly trying to make it up to the steward, and went back towards my car.

I collided with Plagus on the third platform.

"Where is the club car?"

He smiled. "Two way up front. One on the end, next your car. You'll like the end best, ma'am. Buy the magazines for it myself. Hardly nobody there except people from your very own car. You get acquainted that way."

I smiled back at him. "I'm not sure I want to: I sat across from Mink and Massive for breakfast—"

Plagus snickered. "That's good." He nodded. "Miss Sandra Mitchell. Mr. Holmes Mitchell. They Mink and Massive." He pushed the door open. "There you go, Mrs. Dean. Mink and Massive."

The door whispered shut behind me. I walked unsteadily back to the roomette and picked up my brief-case. I could see all the white paper inside, and the pencils Jake had sharpened for me, and the three pages of notes for story ideas.

The club car was a surprise, so much like a sitting-room. It was empty. I settled in a chair that fitted more than half around me, before a table that pulled up neatly over my knees, and was ready to get some plotting done. But I stared out the window, entranced, still trying to figure this great aloneness, this remote good feeling of rushing headlong into something that would belong to me and to nobody else.

After a while I opened the brief-case. I pulled out one of the pencils and started to study the scribbled notes I had made.

They burst into the room, gaiety and laughter slung out before them.

Sonya Abbott was as beautiful as she looked on the

screen. Her dark hair seemed wayward, but made its point in every whirl. Her eager dark eyes were enormous. Her mouth, the only touch of color, was warm and lovely against her flawless skin. She wore a tight beige cashmere sweater and exquisitely fitted slacks, the kind that hug the knee and calf and demand that each be sweetly proportioned.

A group buzzed around her. I watched Sonya settle herself in their midst, then I looked towards the entrance.

A very tall and lean, blue-eyed young man, with a mouth tied down wryly at the corners, walked towards the hubbub. I put him immediately into a plaid shirt and jeans and recognised him as one of the cowboys Jake waited for on TV. Vaguely I remembered that he was also Sonya's husband.

Sonya's expressive hands, the hands that had served her so well in her last dramatic picture, gathered them all in around her.

"Tag," she called, a demand that was gracious and sure. "Come here, pet. Sit beside me. Who has the Scrabble board?"

Tag moved slowly. He stopped to open a magazine from the rack. To bend over and look out the window. To rub a hand across his forehead as if it ached. Once he glanced my way—more than the rest of them had done—and there was no interest in

his eyes. He finally reached the table and pushed himself in beside Sonya. She put one arm up around his neck and pinched his ear. He pulled away a little.

"Ring the bell for Plagus," she cried. "Let's have some more coffee."

There was a scurry to obey. Somebody spread out the Scrabble board. Plagus came through the door.

"Plagus, you old rascal," Sonya Abbott called to him, her voice like rough cream. "Last night I told Tag, if Plagus isn't on that train, I'm going to turn right around. Like an old family retainer, you are."

I watched Plagus smile what must have been his number-one grin, the one reserved for white folks who pulled that Old-South routine.

"I been looking forward, Miss Sonya. Happy to serve you, Mr. Tag. Haven't missed one of your pictures since last year."

There was no resemblance in his drawl to the man who snickered with me over Mink and Massive.

Sonya lowered her voice to intimacy. "We're just going to relax and take it easy. I'm not even wearing make-up. Maybe this time, Plagus, nobody will recognise me and we can just have a happy, cosy trip."

Who, then, is the retinue?

I thought. And what am I—the invisible woman?

"Yes, ma'am," Plagus pledged devoutly. "I keep your secret."

And she'd have his head if he did, I added silently.

A voice next to me said, "They always make a noise about it, don't they?"

I swung, startled, to look at the man who had seated himself beside me unnoticed. I nodded. I felt suddenly shy, the way it was when my mother taught me never to speak to strangers.

"There's a thin one," the man added. He tipped his cigar towards the door.

She huddled in the opening and she was thin, all right. Young and thin and all eyes and scared. She wore a shabby grey suit that hung on her enough so that I knew her thinness was recent.

"Last night," the man next to me said thoughtfully, "I was very near blind. Never take more than three—"

"Martinis at the Biltmore," I finished.

He looked startled then. "Yeah. How did—"

"Last night—" I prodded.

He studied the suddenly dead end of his cigar. "You know how it is when you're looped? Don't answer that. But all at once everything was clear." He nodded his head towards the thin girl standing in the doorway.

"There she was in her roomette. Head back. Eyes closed. Hands like dead, folded over a black purse. I said something to her, 'It will be all right, dear'—something like that. She opened her eyes. Wide. Scared." He put the cigar to his mouth and struck a match and leaned it against the flame. "Her eyes are dark blue and Irish."

"You have a flair for description," I said. I looked back at the girl.

THE huge man and his daughter showed up behind her. The mink coat pushed against her and she made way for them. It was painful to watch her gather her forces and come into the car, to sink quickly into the nearest chair. Sandra and Holmes Mitchell settled themselves in the two chairs the other side of me.

"Well," the man on my right said, "that ought about do it."

"Do what?"

"Account for the customers in our car."

I sid another glance in his direction. He was about Bruce's age. Dark. A little thin himself. His hands moved all the time.

"There could be more."

He nodded. "Doubt it, though. Several empties up there." He glanced at my brief-case. "You a buyer?"

I shook my head. The shyness came back. I wasn't used to telling strangers I put words on paper.

"Then what? Why the brief-case?"

"I—I write."

"Well, what do you know. Articles?"

"Stories."

"About what?"

"About people." I picked up the pencil and began to doodle.

He laughed abruptly. "People," he said. "That covers a lot of territory. And what would you write about me?" He looked at me as if he liked me.

I was lost for a moment in his look, lost back where the train had picked me up, in the thought that I had carried for quite a long time, in the feeling that Bruce never really looked at me any more. Not as

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# "FAST TRAIN TO NEW YORK," by Charlotte Edwards

Such a wild panic filled them that I stood erect immediately.

"I'm sorry," I said softly, not wanting to disturb her further. "There's so much motion."

The panic receded a little, looked at me from a distance, at bay and not giving an inch.

"Mind if I sit down?" She shook her head and slid her eyes away from mine.

"This is certainly a luxurious way of travelling, isn't it?" She nodded slowly.

"That's Sonya Abbott over there," I whispered. "Recognise her?"

She looked in the direction of the actress. "Is it?" Her voice was low and good. But flat, as if it were too much effort to endow it with inflection or with warmth.

"My name's Ann Dean," I volunteered. "I'm a writer." That surprised me. I'd never offered such information before.

"What do you write about?" she asked with no interest.

"People." It was beginning to sound foolish. I ought to have a more specific field, I told myself. Atom bombs or recipes or child care.

She moved her head slowly towards me, as if the hinges of her neck would crack with any sudden movement. "Hah," she said. "People."

I kept quiet. "Young love, I suppose."

Her nice eyes were suddenly full of anger. "Boy meets girl, boy loses girl, boy gets girl. Only when he gets girl he doesn't want her. Would that be a switch? Would that sell a story for you?"

I said softly, trying not to make it an interruption, "That's been done."

"So it has," she said tiredly. "And recently." She reached for her purse. I knew she wanted to get away from me, regretting the vaguely disguised confidences.

"What's your name?" I asked, this time insistently.

"Ellamae Hubbins."

"Sounds like a big kitchen and apple pies baking and lilacs by the window."

"What it really is—" she clutched her purse tighter—"is a cold-water flat, a mother in a sanatorium and a father who used to be an important lawyer until he lost his courage." She stopped abruptly, putting one hand over her mouth.

"Sometimes," I said, looking out the window, keeping my face as noncommittal as possible, "what we need more than anything is somebody to talk to whom we'll never see again."

I nodded sagely. "Now me," I went on, knowing from experience that a confidence breeds a confidence. "I'm sort of taking stock on this trip. My husband and I — it seems to me we've been growing apart for a long time. Each day, each week, a little further apart."

It was true. I'd said it to make Ellamae Hubbins talk away some of the daze and fear in her eyes. But it was true. It had dredged itself up out of some deep place. It had companion thoughts. These I did not give voice to. These I only looked at.

Could there be another woman? Was that why Bruce looked at me so calmly, never with the old intensity, the old joy in his eyes? Was he suddenly attracted to somebody? The way I had been attracted, was attracted, to Grady Oliver, probably now sitting in the front club car getting himself stinking before lunch?

It doesn't take much, I thought, when you've been married as long as we have. A touch of special gallantry, of special interest —

Ellamae Hubbins said "Hah" again and brought me from my thoughts. "I've talked

and talked. I'm all talked out."

"To whom?" "Doctors. Do you know what a nervous breakdown is?" Her words tumbled. "I had one. It takes a long while to get over one—" She began to shake.

I put my hand over hers. "Let's have a cup of coffee and forget all this seriousness."

"I'm afraid of people again," she whispered, bending her head over her locked fingers. "I got all over it, you see. And Johnny had this good job in California." She stopped again.

I let the silence wrap her, hoping it would make her feel secure, alone. It did.

"Then my father died," she shook her head. "There was insurance. Quite a lot of it. Imagine, a cold-water flat and defeat all those years. But he kept up the insurance. And I never knew."

"He must have been quite a person."

Again that shake of the head. "No. Yes. I don't know. I can't picture him any more."

"And Johnny?" I slid it in gently.

The anger was in her eyes again. "People like Johnny can't wait for nervous breakdowns. Maybe if they knew there was insurance, they could. But he didn't know." She let out a funny, frightening little giggle. "I wanted to surprise him. Fly out and surprise him."

She turned to me. "Did you ever go to the man you love? On wings of song, I kept thinking all the way out." She began to laugh. "You should have seen his face. And hers. His wife is very rich. Isn't that nice?"

The laughter spilled shal- lowly all around us.

I've got to stop this, I told myself. She'll crack wide open right here in front of all of them.

I stood up and stretched my hand down and took hers and pulled her to her feet. I tucked my brief-case under one arm and put the other around her shoulders. I propelled her out of the car.

The vestibule rocked wildly, but the air was good, cold, and fresh. We stood there together, not talking. I knew the tears were running down her cheeks. I ignored them.

After a while she took out a handkerchief, blew her nose, scrubbed at her eyes like a child. "That's what happens," she said forlornly. "It happens all the time."

"That's not so bad. They say it's good for you."

The heavy door ahead swung open and Plagus pushed through it.

I noticed the little chimes in his hand. "Lunchtime already? Where has the morning gone?"

"Down the rails," Plagus chuckled. "Morning, noon, and night, all goes down the rails on the Super Chief." He opened the club-car door.

"Lunch," I said decisively. "That's exactly what I need. It will be good to have it with you. This morning—" I pushed her ahead of me, telling her about Mr. Mitchell and his ugly daughter.

I stopped at my roomette. "Would you like to wash up in my house?"

She shook her head. "I'm just two up."

She swung around and I watched her walk. She carried herself well, pride earned the hard way in a cold-water flat. Inherited from her father, perhaps.

I cleaned up. When I pulled aside the curtains, Grady Oliver was sitting in the empty roomette across from mine.

"Ready for lunch?" I could smell the liquor, but the charm-

ing smile was on his lips and the interest, the waiting-to-see-what-I-would-say-next look, was in his eyes.

"I'm lunching with someone."

"Male?" He stood up. He took my arm in the narrow aisle as the train lurched.

I shook my head and disengaged my arm. "According to your own phrase — the thin one."

He took a step away from me and looked out over my head. "The little frightened dear."

He looked down at me again and smiled. "Getting material, Annie?"

I pulled myself tight with the nickname. Bruce's nickname. "Hardly," I snapped. "She's a nice lost child and she's been through some sort of bad emotional experience."

"And we—" he took my arm again and steered me towards the front of the train—"shall heal all scars."

I stopped before the curtain where Ellamae had disappeared. "Miss Hubbins," I called.

"We're ready."

She pulled the curtains apart, holding them tightly. She looked past me to Grady Oliver and the panic came into her eyes again.

"Oh," she said breathlessly, "I didn't think your husband—I thought—alone—"

I touched her shoulder. "This is not my husband. This is Grady Oliver. He seems nice enough, and harmless, and he doesn't like to eat by himself either. Come along, huh?"

"I'm—I'm not hungry."

Grady Oliver took over. "Nonsense." He sounded like a father who felt his full authority. "You need to put some meat on those bones, my girl."

I DON'T know how it happened, but we were suddenly walking down the aisle, Grady leading the way, Ellamae after him, and I bringing up the rear to shut off her retreat.

This time there was room in the dining-car. The smells were good and all at once I was starved.

"I'll order," said Grady, pompous with two poor weak women to look after. He jotted and erased like an epicure.

Ellamae and I looked at each other. For the first time I saw how lovely she could be, given half a chance. She smiled. The deep blue of her eyes brightened. Her cheeks rounded. It was good.

"No minds of our own," I whispered stably.

"None at all," she whispered back. "None at all," she repeated slowly, the smile completely gone.

"Now," Grady said when the waiter had taken the order. "Let's help Ann here with her stories. We have already the popular triangle. Charming, carefree young man. Me. Choice of sophisticated dissatisfied wife, Ann. Or delicious, fresh young girl." He flipped a hand towards Ellamae.

It went on for some time. I kept my eyes on one or the other of them, but my mind walked independently.

There was some validity in what he was saying. Or it could be Sandra Mitchell. What a change a little attention from Grady Oliver would make on that sour face. Would it be the thing? Would she begin to like all people, if one young man were to court her? Or would she think he was after her money? What would be her father's reaction? Could he live without her? Could he live without the feeling of guilt he'd probably had since the day he saw his own features repeated in feminine form?

Why, I thought, dipping into

the good soup, nodding and smiling at them, there were endless possibilities here, endless variations.

I was suddenly anxious to get away from everybody. To shut myself up and explore the ramifications with a pencil and my brief-case. Such feelings don't come too often to a writer. They're like money in the bank, when one idea leads to another and you have a clear-cut, marching line that you can follow in straight sequence.

"Imagine, steaks for lunch," I said happily.

Then suddenly the thought of steaks combined with the motion of the water in the glass before me, the hidden rock of the chair I sat in, and nausea climbed heavily into my throat.

I reached frantically into my purse for the little yellow pills, swallowed one hastily, and stood up, clutching the back of the chair.

"You'll have to excuse me," I said thickly. "Cancel my order, will you?"

I staggered down the aisle away from them. I spent quite a few minutes in the first vestibule, drinking in the clear cold air, and the pill began to do its work. Then I went to my roomette, opened the brief-case, and found the little folded slip.

To Whom It May Concern . . . I'm going to kill myself . . .

Now, I've read my share of mystery stories and I've watched them on the stage, in the movies and TV. In each case I've followed along with the clues, tried to add them up once in a while, and have been completely fooled at the end. I just can't think that way.

So when I was confronted with a mystery, and one that my pounding heart told me had to be solved before I got off the train, I was totally at a loss.

People, I'd said over and over. But what in the wide and wonderful world, I asked myself, is more of a mystery than one human being, one human soul, one human mind?

All I knew surely was that this mystery had to be solved by figuring out a human soul and mind.

The train slowed for one of its rare stops. A platform slid into view below me. For a moment I was distracted.

There was a big news-stand, papers and magazines alternating with bright souvenirs. There was a wide stairway of stone that led downward. Sitting cross-legged before a building there were a half-dozen Indians, their wares neatly displayed.

My curtain bulged and rustled.

"You there?" Grady Oliver asked softly. "Are you all right, Ann?"

"I'm fine. Where are we?"

I didn't open the curtains. Would I see it in Grady Oliver's dark eyes, the determination to do away with that quick body, those moving hands, those fast-spoken, gay words?

"Albuquerque." He opened the curtains a little. "We can get out and stretch our legs, you know."

It was childish. I didn't look at him. As if I were a seer and with the note in my hand I could read all about him.

"I'm afraid to get out. What if the train goes off without us?"

Plagus' voice rumbled over Grady's shoulder. "No danger, Mrs. Dean. We gotta wash up here. I let you know plenty of time."

I stood up. "Shut that curtain, you impudent young man, and I'll make myself beautiful."

Grady pulled the curtains back fully and looked at me solemnly, no smile, no quip for once. "You are beautiful."

He slapped the curtains together.

I stood there, staring into the mirror over the washbowl, hearing his words go simply and sincerely around the small enclosure. But, strangely, not hearing them in Grady's voice. Hearing them in Bruce's. As he used to say it, in those years before the boy was born.

How many years ago?

I washed my face and was careful with the bright lipstick. I folded the slip of paper and tucked it into my jacket pocket. I went out, down the aisle. Grady was waiting on the platform.

"Hurry up, ma'am," Plagus called from the pavement below. "Them washin' machines going get our way right soon."

The ground felt strange under my feet. "It's as if we'd been on this train forever."

Grady took my arm. "I feel as if I'd known you forever," he said in the same solemn voice with which he'd complimented me.

"Now, Grady," I rebuked him. "After all, since nine this morning."

He stretched his free hand out from his cuff and looked at his watch. "It's past one-thirty now."

"You've had a bad time, that's all. Your trip West didn't work out the way you thought it would. So any sympathetic shoulder—"

He snorted. "Lots of sympathetic shoulders in the world."

Some of them beautiful, too. Not much—sympathy between people. Know what I mean?"

"I know."

He looked down at me and smiled. "You know all about me, don't you, Ann Dean? You think you've got me pegged and condensed into a few lines in that brief-case of yours." He shook his head and his smile went away. "It's not that simple."

No, I thought, it's not. It could be you. Easily. You're the tense type, the sensitive kind, and you try to get away from it by drinking. Maybe you wrote that note.

How could you do it, Grady? Jump off the train in the deepest part of the night? Take sleeping pills in your Bedroom C, the heavy door locked, so that nobody would notice until they'd done a thorough job? You wouldn't shoot yourself, would you? You're too neat for that.

This is going entirely too far, I thought, and found that I had said it loudly and definitely.

Sandra Mitchell and her father swung their heads around simultaneously to stare at us. I stared back, hard and rudely. Their faces looked ridiculously alike, hinged over their shoulders that way.

"What is?" Grady asked.

"Nothing," I said to Grady. "Sometimes my mind goes off on a tangent. I want to buy some things for my boy."

I disengaged myself and walked briskly over to the souvenir stand. There were lots of things Jake would like. I bought a little horse, beaded entirely in bright colors. I bought a hand-carved whistle. I picked up a tooled leather belt.

There was a loud hissing in the air. I looked towards the front of the train. A queer contraption was moving slowly along the sides of the big silver cars. Double iron frames with hoses up the sides like cell bars. The water pushed itself in hundreds of fine streams against the entire car, windows and all.

"Behind it come the brushes," a voice said by my shoulder. "They polish the whole shebang."

I turned around and felt hot red mount my cheeks. After all, it's not every day a movie star speaks to you first, even if he's only a B-picture boy, even if it's only about washing a train.

"Wonderful age we live in," I managed. "It's nice to meet you in person, Mr. Bailey. You've inhabited our living-

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# "FAST TRAIN TO NEW YORK," by Charlotte Edwards

room every night for over a year."

He looked pleased around the mouth, a pleasure that did not extend to his eyes. They were very blue, all right, and seemed to reflect the sky, in the way the eyes of men who spend their lives on the sea or outdoors on horseback usually do.

The brushes came along the side of the train, huge, whirling, coarse ones, as if the train were an outsize pair of shoes. When they passed us the noise was deafening. They left pure polished silver behind them, all the grime scrubbed away.

Tag Bailey leaned a little towards me and yelled, "You got kids?"

I nodded. I held up my index finger. "Why?"

"That about TV. Grownups—" he grinned and lowered his voice suddenly as the brushes marched down the car behind us—"never pay me no mind."

He reached for the belt in my hand, then pulled out a pen. Beside the buckle he wrote: "Greetings, Pardon." Then he looked down at me. "What's his name?"

"Jake. How did you know it was a boy?"

"Girls hardly ever pay me no mind either." He added, writing as he said it, "Jake, from Tag Bailey."

"He'll be out of his mind."

He handed me the belt and threw a bill on the counter. "Wish I had a dozen kids." He sounded fierce, almost the way he did when he ordered, "Reach for the sky, Buster."

He swung around quickly and took the steps to our car in two touches of his boots.

I stared at the belt. Well, I thought—well. It isn't an easy thing to be married to somebody like Sonya Abbott. It could be quite a terrible thing, as a matter of fact. So desperately in love with the sheer beauty of her that you could never let her go. Sharing only the fragments. Not daring to ask her to find time for you. Companionship. Children. You could be very lonely, married to Sonya Abbott.

Lonely. The word popped out in black letters on the slate of my mind. Anybody who knows what it is to be lonely . . . I am a simple soul . . .

Why, it could easily be Tag Bailey. He could have written that note. A little flowery for him, maybe. But maybe inside he felt flowery.

Far up ahead the silver train gave a gusty snort, then went back to its even breathing.

I looked for Grady Oliver, against my will. He was with the Indians, fingering their blankets, smiling and nodding. I clutched my purchases and went back to the train. I stopped abruptly, as if a hand were laid on my shoulder, before Roomette 10.

What was the matter with me that I could have forgotten her?

Of all the naturals for suicide, the poor, torn little Ellamae Hubbins was the most suspect.

I touched her curtains. The heavy door was shut behind them. I tapped on it, trying to keep my hand and breathing

steady. I waited. There was no answer.

I knocked more solidly, feeling the sting against my knuckles. This time the blood pounded in my ears. I leaned towards the door trying to hear some sound behind it. I was dimly aware of the increased noise of the engine, the sound of voices. I was more sharply aware of a body pushing around me in the aisle, trying to touch me.

I turned. I reached out without thinking and clutched at a coat. It was softer than anything I had ever touched. I knew that it was Sandra Mitchell's mink.

"I beg your pardon," she said, not begging anything.

For a brief moment I forgot the shut door, pierced by the ice of her voice, as if my touch were that of a snake.

"There's something wrong here," I said. "Please find Plagus. We must open this door."

I swung my head away from her, looking back down the aisle, searching for Grady.

She pulled her coat gently, not to spare my clutch as much as to protect the fine fur. "It's no affair of mine. And I don't know who Plagus is."

"Plagus," I snapped, "is the porter. Get him! Right away!"

All of her face went slack suddenly and there was shock in her eyes. I knew that in the whole of her life nobody had ever commanded her in that abrupt, definite way.

She didn't answer, but she swung around and went out of the car.

"Ellamae!" I found myself crying. "Ellamae, open the door!"

There was nothing but silence behind the curtains, down the aisle, in the whole of the car. Silence, and my ragged breathing.

Plagus broke it. He came hurrying towards me. He looked almost pale. In the years of his portering he probably knew the look of a bad one. To my surprise, Sandra Mitchell was behind him, this time curiosity sharpening her nose and tightening her lips.

"What's the matter here?" Plagus asked. "This ain't your place, Mrs. Dean."

"I know. Maybe I'm foolish, but I—I've just got a feeling. Miss Hubbins—she's in there. She—" I couldn't go on. What was there to go on about, really?

Plagus knocked loudly. There was no answer.

We stood there, the three of us, staring at the smooth outside door, one that now frightened me beyond all previous fears. A coffin, I thought. It's a coffin, and how can you beat down that heavy door?

There was the forward snuffling sound of the engine again, like a great hound dog with its nose to the ground. It must have drowned the click as the door of Roomette 10 slid slowly open and Ellamae Hubbins stood facing us.

Her mouth was shaped to the finish of a yawn. Her eyes were sleepy slits of blue. Her cheeks were flushed.

"Ellamae!" I cried quickly,

instinct telling me she was about to retreat from the three curious faces.

Plagus said, "Well!" He walked off quietly towards the club car, a man trained in tact, to look, to see, and then not to wonder.

"Are you all right?" I was conscious of the mink coat behind me. Funny, I'd never known before that mink possessed an odor, the smell of richness.

Ellamae made herself tall. "Of course I'm all right. I'm not used to steak for lunch. It made me sleepy."

I looked past her out through the window. The station at Albuquerque was moving slowly past us. Cleaned, polished, rested, and freshly eager, the Super Chief was on its way again.

Suddenly, as had happened to me a few times before in my life, I was tired of people. Of their real problems and of the unreal ones I could cook up in my own mind.

"I'm sorry, Miss Hubbins." I matched her formality. "It was foolish of me to worry. Please forget it."

**S**ANDRA MITCHELL was in my path, and this time I made sure that I was the one to avoid the touch of her coat. I went through car after car filled with strangers, blessing their strangeness. I came to the forward club car and the glass-dome observation lounge.

I walked up the few circular steps and settled myself towards the back, looking out over the country now hurrying by and closing my mind to everything. To everybody. To a white slip of paper with words on it.

Up on top of the train that way, it was a view that doubled over on itself and stretched outward, adding miles of perspective. There were square-cut rocks in the distance, even in the grey day filled with strange pink and purple shades. There was no sign, as far as I could see ahead or back or sideways, of any human habitation.

Slowly I settled down to the immensity, letting it seep into me, letting its fine emptiness fill the crumpled corners of my brain. After a while I put my head back against the comfortable seat and the further immensity of sleep surrounded me, shutting off all the people, shutting off me.

When I opened my eyes the deepest purple was all over the land, revealing only hidden glimpses of the flat earth. There were no rocks, no hills now. A sudden blur of lights slid by and was gone.

I was suddenly terribly hungry, and the remembrance of Grady's writing "Steak" brought juices to my mouth. I was alone in the car.

Alone. Alone.

I stood up quickly, before I could think of the rest of the note. There was a small dining-car at the foot of the stairs. I found a place at an empty table for two. I wrote rapidly, duplicating the order that had

sent me from the dining-car at noon.

The lights seemed very bright after the deep blue of the observation lounge. When the tomato juice came I drank it at a gulp. I was engrossed in the cutting of my steak when I heard a chair slide back across from me.

I looked up, then quickly back. There were dark glasses, but even so you could tell that it was Sonya Abbott.

This time, I told myself, I wouldn't wonder. Not what she was doing alone across from me nor why she should run off from the rest of them. I just didn't care. Anybody who could find suicide in the mind of this pampered famous beauty was a fool.

She handed the waiter her order in silence. Incognito, I thought. She knew that husky voice would give her away. I could tell by the waiter's equally silent deference, though, that he knew her.

I was pouring a second cup of coffee when she spoke to me. "What happened to you?"

My head must have shot up like a turtle's out of its shell.

"Me?" My voice sounded rusty.

She nodded. "That nice-looking man and the thin girl—they've been wondering. All afternoon they sat together, or went out to look around, or asked Plagus—"

"That's kind of them." It didn't sound as if I thought it at all kind. It sounded huffy.

Sonya Abbott smiled. The good Lord certainly gave her a set of teeth, on top of all the other natural wonders.

"They didn't look far enough, I guess. I asked myself, where would I go if the world pressed?" She stretched her smile to a grin. "Well, I tried all the ladies' rooms from there to here . . ."

I found myself smiling back. This was a nice kid. Believe it or not, this movie star who had lifted her chin at me this morning was really a nice kid.

"I noticed you before." She leaned her elbows on the table. Her sleeves fell back, showing how rosy, how smooth and young her arms were. "There's something about your eyes. As if you saw a lot and didn't do any condemning." She lowered her head.

I took another long taste of the black coffee. If I was any judge, I was about to be the recipient of confidences. No. I willed. Not this time. Annie, I told myself sternly.

"You're not eating," I commented, avoiding it. "How do you expect to keep up your strength?"

She sighed dramatically. "They don't worry about strength in my business. Only about curves and how many inches." She put a hand towards me, curled and begging, saying a great deal in its trained plea. "Let's go sit up in the dome car. Let's just get away from all of them."

"I don't know . . ." I began. "Please."

I got up. As Tag Bailey must have done. As all her

crew must have done. As anybody would have done if Sonya Abbott put that certain tone in her voice, that certain look on her mouth.

The purple was gone and night flashed blackly against the windows, suggesting movement rather than showing it. We sat for a while in silence, and then she began to talk.

"I don't want to hurt anybody," she said softly, and it was like a movie there in the dark. "I tried not to take this trip to New York. Because Bart's there. If I see him, it will hurt Tag. Tag is so good."

Wherever you go, my pretty, I thought, Bart and a dozen like him will be there. Probably always have been there. So you want to have your cake and eat it too. Probably you've done that always. It makes a good scene, doesn't it? Poor, dear Tag. B-picture, TV Tag.

"He's—he's strictly New York," she went on, weaving her spell. "Slim and groomed and sure of himself. There's an apartment on the East River. The view—" She stopped, letting me paint the picture for myself. "He has so many friends. From all over. They confuse me. So smart. So tricky with words. But when they all go home . . ."

I could feel the tender, reminiscent proud smile in her voice as if I could see it on her face.

"When all the people go

home—then I am not confused."

I didn't say anything. I stayed out of it.

I thought of the tremendous temptations a girl like this must face. I wondered how it would be always and always to have a choice. To know that if you stretched out one beautiful hand any of them would come running. It wasn't fair, I decided, ever to judge the Sonya Abbotts of the world by normal moral standards. Why, I—somebody like me—I could go through my whole life and never find another man willing to risk all for love of me.

I thought of Grady Oliver for some reason, vaguely ashamed that he should walk into my mind at that moment. As if I had conjured him up, I saw his head lift at the top of the stairs, followed by Ellamae's. The two of them came down the aisle.

Ellamae took a look at Sonya, opened her mouth, shut it. Grady ignored Sonya and came straight to me. He half-sat on the arm of the chair. His tweed sleeve rubbed my hair.

"So," he said. "So."

He leaned towards me. I felt stiff and young, his proximity as startling as the first time I danced with a boy.

"Sit down, Ellamae," I invited, bending forward out of the circle of Grady's arm.

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## Wuff, Snuff & Tuff



FOR THE CHILDREN

by TIM

# "FAST TRAIN TO NEW YORK," by Charlotte Edwards

"This is Sonya Abbott. Miss Hubbins, Mr. Oliver."

Ellamae swallowed painfully, nodded awkwardly, and sat down weakly.

Grady said, "I know. How do you do?" He touched my shoulder and pulled me to the back of the chair again. "Relax," he whispered in my ear.

Ellamae and Sonya looked alike in their big chairs. Apparently, meeting just people who did not flatter her stunned Sonya into shyness.

Grady asked, "What is this? Old Home Week?"

Mink and Massive were coming down the aisle. They both looked sullen. I smelled the burned edge of an argument.

To my amazement Ellamae spoke up, addressing Sandra Mitchell. "We found her."

"So I see."

Mr. Mitchell's voice boomed when he wasn't cajoling his daughter. "Nobody's got a right to disappear on a train, young lady."

"Thanks for the 'young lady'!" I said. "I didn't disappear. I came forward."

Sonya stood up, catlike, as they sat in books. "I'll go now."

Grady got to his feet. "Buy you a drink?" He swung a hand to include us. "Buy you all a drink?"

I might have missed it except that I was looking at Sandra Mitchell. Her eyes got an eager look, the first light I had seen in them. She leaned a little forward quickly.

Grady, I told myself. The idea of having a drink with an attractive man—then I saw her father's beefy hand come down solidly on her furred arm. I looked again.

Of course! The glass crutch was written all over her. Grady Oliver had nothing to do with her eagerness, or any other man, or any woman. Alone or with somebody, it made no difference. The drink was the thing. It was the drink that was important. Desperately so.

Oh, darn it, I thought dismally, here I am again.

I stood up, because while I was staring they must have accepted Grady's offer. We started the long walk back to our own club car, a single file, Grady in the lead, each vestibule assailing us with air that had snow in it.

The observation car behind our car was empty except for Tag Bailey. He sat with his chair swung towards the dark window, not doing anything, just staring into blackness.

Grady held the final door. Sonya went past him, rubbing against him a little, as unconscious, as conscienceless as a cat. His face stayed still and untouched. He's met this kind before, I thought.

We distributed ourselves around. Something had happened since last night. In the trainload of strangers we had somehow drawn together, if only because we had looked at one another's faces enough so that they were familiar.

Plagus came in and took our orders. He looked insulted, as if we had no right to traffic with the forward club cars.

I leaned back and waited for my lemonade. Sonya Abbott had ordered one, too. Sandra Mitchell had asked for a double Scotch, her outthrust chin turned away from her father's beseeching eyes.

Grady said, "If the train would stop lurching we could get some charades going."

It was hard to know whether he was laughing at all of us or not. I closed my eyes. "Not me. It's lemonade and bed for me."

Mr. Mitchell said, "Funny thing, charades coming back like that. I remember when I was first married, my wife—"

Sandra interrupted him. "My

mother was a very beautiful woman," she said, cold and even. "She could act out Venus at the Pump and make it real."

Sonya said, "They're always so hard to guess." She sighed. "I've had so little opportunity for reading."

Tag said, softly but clearly. "For learning to read, you mean."

I opened my eyes. Tag knew, then, from what sort of soil this exquisite flower had blossomed.

Plagus brought the drinks. I sipped mine, watching, caught up in it again.

Sonya was staring steadily at Tag over the rim of her glass. Mr. Mitchell had his eyes hard on Sandra. Sandra had her glance glued to the heavy brown liquid that she raised slowly, very slowly, in a sharp-nailed hand so tense the knuckles showed white. Ellamae was holding her glass up to the light, turning it around, a childlike pleasure on her face.

I turned to look for Grady Oliver. His eyes were on me. He kept them there. For a moment I couldn't control the heat in my face. He nodded slowly. Then he got up and came over to me, one hand outstretched to pull me from my chair. I put down the lemonade on the little round stand and locked my hands together in my lap, like a child.

He smiled and shook his head. "It won't do any good. Come along. I want to be with you. I want to talk to you."

I found myself getting up. Don't ask me why. I've asked myself so often I know there is no answer. I led the way out of the car, my eyes straight ahead so that if the others wondered and looked I wouldn't know it. I walked through our car. In the vestibule beyond it I stopped.

"This is silly, Grady." I turned to him. Never in my life have I fought breathlessness more. "We're absolute strangers. I don't like the way you look at me, or the—the way you act—"

"Don't you?" He didn't try to touch me. It was very cold and I shivered a little. But he didn't try to touch me. "How have I acted?"

"I don't know. Oh, looking for me, I guess. Signalling me across the car—as if we had a secret."

"Haven't we?"

I shook my head fiercely.

"Have you ever been to Chicago?" he asked, surprising me into another shake of my head. "It's quite a city. Tomorrow we're there for a little more than two hours. Until we hook up to the New York Central. We'll put on warm clothes, and walk along the streets. There's a cathedral I want to show you. Our breath will smoke out—and I'll keep your hand warm in my topcoat pocket."

The look on my face must have stopped him. He relinquished words. He moved his hands towards me and pulled me up close against him. For a long moment I relaxed, the warmth and a dozen other strange feelings taking the will and the strength out of my muscles.

Then I pulled away, almost viciously.

"Listen!" I cried. "Where you get this idea that we are—soulmates, I don't see. Haven't I made it clear by avoiding you most of the day that I don't go for shipboard romances? I'm a married woman—"

I stopped then. Our breath did smoke out, just like he'd pictured it.

He didn't look startled. He looked tender. "But if you weren't," he murmured. "Oh, Ann, if you weren't..." He

smiled. "Don't get all upset. I won't touch you again. I won't even bother you until we get to Chicago. Then we'll walk together. That, at least."

I started to shake my head.

"Yes," he stated firmly. "Those two hours, please. After that, when we reach New York, I—I have other plans."

Other plans. Could they, by any chance, include suicide. Grady Oliver? Could this walk in a cold city with a woman you think understands you be a last something to remember?

We stared at each other. Then I forced a smile.

"All right," I made it as light as I could. "All right, Grady. I'm stuffy and old-fashioned and making too big a deal of this. It's a bad habit of mine, to explore every emotion and build it up. Good night." I walked away from him and he let me go.

Back in the club car there was commotion. Sandra Mitchell was standing up, wiping the front of her coat furiously with a handkerchief. Her father was leaning over, picking up a glass from the floor, a glass centred in a round dark stain.

"...of me," he was saying. "Don't know how that happened. Dollie. Big old arm just knocked your elbow, I guess."

Tag said, "I'll order you another one."

Sandra stopped scrubbing. Something about her was like a dog on a point.

**H**OLMES MITCHELL straightened as fast as he could. "No!" he cried loudly. "No!" He swallowed and altered his tone. "It's getting late. I've got some papers to go over. Have to see a man in Chicago while we're there tomorrow. Come along, Dollie."

It was all on her face. The fury, the hate, the desire to strike him hard across the flabiness of his multiple chins. She moved her own face slowly, studying each of us, flashing for a moment the venom of her heart into our eyes. Then she shrugged.

"Why not?" She turned, grinding her high heel into the dark stain, the wasted liquor.

There was no sound as they paraded out. At the door Holmes Mitchell boomed, "Good night, all."

It was probably, I thought, as good an evening as he had spent in some time.

Tag leaned towards Sonya. "We'd better go, too. You want to get plenty of sleep. Look your best when you hit the big city."

No accent. No sarcasm. No sincerity. Quite simply I felt as if I had walked into his mind.

"Play it dumb, boy," he could be saying. "If it weren't Bart it would be somebody else. Has been somebody else. Will be somebody else. You been around horses enough to get horse sense."

As if he read my thoughts he switched his gaze to mine. Then an astounding thing happened. "Any way you cut it," he said quietly and directly to me. "It's better than I ever dreamed of back on that measly ranch in Wyoming."

He stood up quickly, freeing me. Who's this guy—Dunninger? I thought, bewildered.

Sonya stood beside him. Somehow, during my absence, she had elevated herself to stardom again. They went out without looking our way.

As Tag squeaked the outer door I heard Sonya say plaintively, "I'm hungry."

"You're always hungry." Again it was a plain statement of fact.

"It would be nice," I said to Ellamae, "to have nothing more

to worry about than calories."

I looked at her.

She was tied in knots and staring at her clenched hands.

Everybody seems to be retreating, I thought. What little glow the kid had for a few hours is gone. She's back there where she was.

She didn't lift her head. I knew she didn't hear me. I got up, went to her, put my hand on her arm. "Bedtime," I said brightly.

For some reason I was reminded of the supercheerful nurse who cared for me when Jake was born. "Time to go beddy-bye," she used to lilt at me.

I shook Ellamae. Her head lifted slowly. "What?" she whispered.

"Time to go to bed."

My heart started that fool pounding again. Here was one who didn't want to live, didn't know how to.

"Please," I prayed silently, "let her not even want to—to let go."

I steered her, a sleepy child as Jake was a sleepy child, to her roomette, whispered good night, and went to my own coffin. I undressed quickly and pulled down the bed. After the light was out I lifted the shade.

Coffins, I thought depressingly. All of us up and down this train, lying in the closed secret coffins of ourselves.

The night was white outside. It brought me to a sitting position, my mind caught and entranced with the spreading miles under a white blanket, the slanting, driving snow. Up ahead the great eye of the Super Chief rolled right and left; its great voice yelled for the right of way.

Then there was a gentle braking, a slowing, a hesitation, and we stopped in a maze of tracks. From the parked freight cars strange, bulky figures humped out, swinging lanterns.

I leaned my cheek against the cold window to see better. Up and down the train they went, rubbing and spraying, so that steam jetted out and upward.

Why, I thought, they're defrosting the wheels. It was a good, safe feeling, a relaxing one. I settled back as the train moved slowly again, the way a miler takes it easy the first couple of rounds of the track. I was momentarily calm, knowing that there was nothing I could do tonight.

To Whom It May Concern was out of my mortal hands.

When I dressed Saturday morning I rang for Plagus and

ordered breakfast in my roomette.

After all, I told myself firmly, the whole thing could be a joke. One in very bad taste, but a joke nonetheless. I had a purpose in this trip which had so emotionally sacrificed me. I wasn't going to go three thousand miles away from the boy for nothing.

It was peaceful in the roomette. I sipped my second cup of coffee while I wrote letters home.

To the boy first.

"Miss you very much, but already I have found some treasures for you..."

"Do hope everything is all right, Bruce. Remember, Jake's nose drops are in the chest. Did Jean get him to school on time? We're nearing Chicago. You'd never believe..."

I went on and on. Wherever I started I ended up at the boy. Once I'd put words on paper I was overwhelmed with the need for the sturdiness of my child, the way he said—it was just last week?—"You're a specially good mother."

Repetition is strange. Over the years, working as I do between-times, I'd learned to shut out every distraction once I started to write. I used the letters for that purpose. And another. It was a way, and I knew it, to step out of the obligation that lay beyond my roomette door.

My watch said one-thirty when the Super Chief began to slow, feeling its way through more tracks than I had ever seen, its whistle queeting and searching.

"All right?" it seemed to ask. "Safe to come in here?"

"Safe to come in here?" The words were so clear in my mind that I didn't realise at first they were actually being said. When I did, I jumped to my feet and unzipped the curtains. I was furious because my hands shook.

Grady Oliver stood there, a broad smile on his face, a heavy topcoat over his arm and a businesslike hat in his hand.

"A man of my word, you see. I gave you your solitude all morning. Now you must give me my walk in the snow."

"Grady—" I was again furious because my voice sounded too intense — "have you seen Ellamae this morning?"

He raised an eyebrow. "Left her ten minutes ago. Reading a magazine. Club car."

"And Tag Bailey—and Sonya Abbott?"

He frowned. "What is this? They're finishing lunch in the dining-car."

"The Mitchells?"

He turned it into a real frown. "What are you, a census-taker? Come on, get your coat."

"Now just a minute—"

His shoulders went limp. "All right," he said quietly. "You're not going to keep your promise. I suppose it should be flattering that I'm such a dangerous wolf you don't trust yourself on the streets of Chicago with me."

"It isn't that," I put in hurriedly.

Suddenly it was all back, the feeling I'd tried to hide by running off to the dome car, by writing this morning's letters.

I did find the note. Nobody knew about it but me and the person who wrote it. I was To Whom It May Concern. It concerned me.

Maybe Grady...

"Look," he said patiently. "I told you I wouldn't bother you once we got off this train in New York. I promise I won't try to follow you—or call you. I have—other plans."

No. Not Grady. I couldn't share the note with him. I was sure now of the small hesitation before he mentioned "plans."

The train had stopped. Steam stuttered. Plagus came down the aisle.

"You want to get off here, folks, you do that. Pick up the train at the other station. Make it before four. For comfort's sake." He hustled off, full of things to do.

Suddenly I wanted to be off that train. I wanted to move my legs on land that stayed steady under me. I wanted to get away from the hum of the air-conditioning and anything narrow.

"Go outside," I told Grady. "I'll hurry."

His smile did wonderful things to his face.

I busied myself, feeling quick, deft, and excited. At last I swung out of the roomette and into the bulk of Holmes Mitchell.

"Well," I said. "Good afternoon."

"Mrs. Dean," he whispered—if a whisper could boom, his did—"I hate to bother you"—his beefy face was deep crimson with the unusualness, the embarrassment of asking a favor—"but I don't know who else to turn to."

Under all that blubber, I asked him silently, are you troubled and insecure, at the mercy of your love for your only ugly child, as I am at the mercy of mine for my handsome boy?

"Yes, Mr. Mitchell?"

"I—I know you're working

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# "FAST TRAIN TO NEW YORK," by Charlotte Edwards

on something. I noticed your case. All the papers . . ."

I raised my eyebrows. "Well, I thought—perhaps this afternoon—he swung one hand out toward my letters—you might be busy here. You could keep an eye . . ."

"An eye on what?" He turned his own eyes away from me. "I have to see a man on business," he said fast. "If there were any possible way to avoid it, I would. I tried to make Sandra come with me, but she refuses. She says she's going to stay here and nobody can budge her."

He looked at me then, complete defeat on his face. "Nobody can, either, by Heaven. But if you were here—if you could maybe get her to talking, keep her interested . . ."

I listened to the things he didn't say. I turned my head and looked out the window. Grady Oliver had his hat on and was pacing up and down, waiting.

"I had made other plans," I began, knowing by the past tense that I had already discarded them. "I—I wanted some air."

Holmes Mitchell discarded something then. He discarded his pride. It was a terrible thing to see. "Mrs. Dean," he said, "she got away from me last night. She—she got hold of some—"

He swallowed. "I'll hurry back. If—if she can just be watched—for a little while—"

I couldn't stand his eyes. He must be the loneliest of them all, I thought, and he has every right to throw himself in front of a car, only it had better be a truck if he wants to make sure.

"I'll stay with her," I found myself saying. The words put out entirely the small fire of excitement inside me. It was the way it should be, of course. Not only for Sandra Mitchell but for Ann Dean, who might easily have made quite a fool of herself in the next pair of hours. I was very grateful to Mr. Holmes Mitchell.

"Don't you worry," I patted his arm. "You just run along." He looked like a fat baby about to cry. "And on your way out," I added, knowing I was dodging it, "please tell Mr. Oliver that I can't go sight-seeing, will you?"

He took my hand and squeezed it dramatically. "I will," he promised. "And thank you—thank you. You won't regret it."

I stayed away from the window, out of sight of Grady, but I could see him. He frowned, shrugged his shoulders, and walked quickly away from Mr. Mitchell towards the station. The puff of his breath came out in angry little jerks.

Well, I decided, zipping up my brief-case, you have a chance to make sure Sandra Mitchell gets neither stinking nor dead. But you can't watch her father, or Sonya, or Tag, or Ellamae.

Ellamae? Now, why didn't I think of that? A walk around Chicago with Grady would be just the thing for her. And probably for him.

Once again I seemed to have planted an idea in Grady's mind. He passed under my window, this time not glancing towards it. I swallowed a little panic, thinking he might be going to have it out with me. Instead, his steps stopped short of my roomette at Number 10. After a while Ellamae's light, hesitant footsteps stopped by my curtains. "Mrs. Dean?" she whispered.

I opened them. "Yes," I said quickly. "I think it would be a wonderful thing to do." I straightened the bright scarf she'd tucked

into the collar of her dark cloth coat. "Walk fast, keep warm—and, Ellamae—I leaned towards her—"I think Grady Oliver could stand your help." I held her eyes steadily. "Get him to talk about himself. Build him up. He's an unhappy man."

She walked right outside herself then. As if, for the first time, she realised somebody else in the world might have troubles.

"I'll try," she said. "Though why he'd want to talk to somebody like me—"

"Stop underestimating yourself," I snapped. I gave her a little push.

Where is Sandra Mitchell? I thought. Maybe it only takes her a minute to find Plagus, or another porter, because Plagus probably has his highly tipped orders, and get a glass in her hand.

I hurriedly grabbed my bag and went down the aisle to the club car. There was a great deal of noise emanating from it. I peeked, then retreated hastily. The picture was blazed in my mind.

Sonya Abbott sat in one of the chairs, this time making it a golden throne. She was dressed in a frock of a rich green material. Her perfect profile was turned up towards Tag, who had a suede shirt of palest cream on his broad shoulders and a cream tennison hat on his head. He gazed down at her adoringly. All around them were photographers and people with notebooks.

That, I thought, hurrying towards Sandra's bedroom, takes care of that. As long as they are attired in their public beauty and doling out gems of personal love and wisdom for the public, they're all right.

Grady to take care of Ellamae. Ellamae to take care of Grady. Holmes Mitchell absorbed in business, the breath of life to him. And me to take care of Sandra.

I knocked at the door. "Go away," she cried. Her voice was as ugly as her worst-looking moment. "I told you I won't go with you."

"It's not your father, Miss Mitchell," I kept it calm. "It's Ann Dean. He's gone. I'm—"

I'm at loose ends . . . There was no answer for a few moments. "So what?" she called finally. "Who isn't?"

"I thought maybe we could have Plagus bring us some coffee."

"They take the dining-car off. Come in, if you have to."

I opened the door. She was lying on the bed. If her features were unpleasant when made up, they were a hundred times more so when unaided. The little room was thick with the sour smell of old whisky.

"Take a chair," she swung out one of those sharp-nailed hands. "Make yourself at home. You probably will anyway."

"You know," I said evenly, "I don't give a hoot how rude you are. Writers have to have tough skins."

"So that's what you are. That's why you've been scribbling dabs and dabs in that imitation leather case of yours."

I laughed. "I'll have you know, my girl, it may not be top grain, but it's leather for real."

She buried her head in the pillow. "Did you know," she asked, muffled, "that my mother was a very beautiful woman? Everybody said so. They started telling me that when I was seven years old. Shaking their heads. Too bad, too bad. Still do."

"My boy," I interrupted, "got the surprise of his life when he discovered that the

prettiest girl in the third grade was also the meanest. Told lies, he said, and tattled to the teacher and hit other girls."

She didn't move her head but I felt her listen. I could sense the way she put herself back in the third grade, maybe cowering in the last row, looking longingly at the girls with snub noses, rosebud mouths, curls.

"I told him," I went on, sounding calm and matronly, "that the best-looking people sometimes have the worst-looking insides. And that some of the less endowed are really beautiful because of their thoughts and dispositions."

"Haw!" she snorted.

I waited. "What did he say?" she asked at last.

I laughed again. "He said he was going to marry Donna. She's as broad as she is long, with hair like a string, and her teeth aren't coming in right. But Jake tells me he hasn't ever seen her do anything mean and she's always smiling."

She rolled over and put one arm across her eyes. "Would you get me a drink?" she whispered.

"They take the dining-car



off. And the bar, too, most likely."

She sighed. "Once in a while—," she sounded almost friendly—"there's a stage where I feel beautiful. After about six drinks."

The train jerked and stopped, switched and fooled. The yards were immense, an intricate network of rails that looked like threads woven by insane fingers. We began to trek our way among them, almost delicately.

What is this difference between a network of threads and our lives? I asked myself dramatically. Take any one turning, any wrong track, either deliberately or by accident—"

"There's a bottle hidden in the medicine chest there."

Sandra's voice came sudden and sharp. "Two or three. They look like perfume bottles." She drew a tight breath. "How's that for ingenuity?"

"Pretty good. You must have seen 'Lost Weekend.'"

She sat up, pushing herself with her hands, as if she were old and very ill. "I've seen it," she said wearily, "and not just on film."

"Then let's not see it again."

"In the perfume bottle in the medicine chest," she repeated. "Get it for me."

I stood up. "Get it yourself," I slapped. "Get your spoiled, rotten body out of that dirty, crumpled hovel of a bed and reach for the bottles and swig them down. Go ahead. You want to kill yourself—and your

father—just because your mother was a beautiful woman—you go ahead." I held my breath.

"All right, I will," she screamed furiously. "And don't you dare try to stop me."

She swung her legs over the side of the bed. With her gown pulled up, they were extremely good legs. Not noticeable under mink, of course.

I braced myself. There's a challenge to almost everything, but especially in a mind as set, as compelled as the one that struggled against me.

For one moment she stood tall and proud, and full of fight. Then she collapsed and fell to the floor, sobbing wildly.

I helped her up and pushed her back in bed, smoothing the pillows, the sheets, her hair. I got a cold cloth and put it over her eyes, ignoring the tears that tracked down below it. Finally I sat down again and closed my own eyes. The sobs slowed, at last turned into spasmodic, hiccuppy sighs.

When I opened my eyes my watch told me that we had been moving around in the yards for over an hour. I looked out. We were in the middle of a

"It's in the perfume bottles," I said.

"Thank you," He put one hand against the door as if he couldn't wait to destroy those bottles, to crush them in his huge hands.

I walked with my gay little gift box back to my roomette. I sat staring at the bright yellow bow for a long time, until Plagus stopped a moment to say, "We'll be on our way right soon, ma'am."

"Good," I said. "Let's go, I always say. Let's keep going."

You could feel the gathering of tension, the way watching horses at the start of a race or a man bent over to tighten his muscles for the hundred-yard dash gives you the sense of motion about to become real. Some place behind me there was a light, girlish giggle. I realised, astounded, that it was Ellamae's.

Under my window the photographers and the people with the little notebooks went chattering past, ready to inform the world that Sonya Abbott and Tag Bailey had the ideal marriage, were really homy folks, liked to cook and walk in the rain . . .

Grady said at my door, "We had a very fine time. Did you get a nap?" He had a polite, unfriendly face on.

I matched his tone. "I didn't sleep. I've been thinking."

His lips turned up a very little. "It seems to be a thing you do consistently—maybe even well." He walked away.

So. All right, Grady. You're rude because you like me and I've hurt your vanity. All right, Grady.

We began to move.

Plagus came bustling down the aisle, a fresh white coat on. There was a second-wind feeling about the whole train. The New York Central was in charge now, and its business was quite different from that of the Santa Fe. It had no concern with the danger of mountains and tracks twisting between high-piled rocks. No concern with plains and great speed.

The New York Central was in a sophisticated business. That of tracking its way from city to city, evading a hundred other trains going about their own affairs, blowing arrogance at small, by-passed towns, and slowing properly at Cleveland, Buffalo, Rochester, to admit their size.

I watched for a while, then I turned to the little box. Inside lay a pair of earrings. Opals, filled with a hundred fires and set in exquisitely filigreed gold. I tried them on. I had no right to keep them. But opals are my birthstone—so I quieted my conscience.

I took care with my appearance, living up to the earrings, and was ready to follow Plagus down the aisle when he came by with his little chimes.

There was something interesting in having a fresh set of strangers there in the strange dining-car. I slid into a banquetette affair and ordered the most expensive meal I could find, to go with the opals.

They came in. All of them.

Tag and Sonya were first. The gasp that went through the place was audible. They nodded to me. The residue of glances hit against me, one of the honored.

Grady held the door for Ellamae. From them, too, I received nods, curt from him, beaming from her. This keeps up, I thought, I'm going to have to rule out Ellamae. Unless Grady does her dirt. Then she's a goner sure.

The Mitchells were last. Sandra had combed her hair carefully and put some make-up on her eyelashes, as if she had read my thoughts about

their length and luxuriance. She stopped by my table.

With great effort, painful to watch, she pulled the unused corners of her mouth up into a rusty smile. "Thank you," she said. It took a minute. The two words seemed to scratch all the way up her throat. But she said them.

I knew what she meant. Not for the perfume bottles, that refusal with which she was most familiar, but for the story of Jake and his affection for Donna.

Holmes Mitchell didn't smile or speak. He just looked at my earrings and nodded, as if I had done the second favor for him by letting him pay for the first.

"Two by two," I muttered after they had passed me. "Into the ark, two by two."

After dinner I went to the forward club car. I went because I knew that before nine o'clock the next morning, Eastern Standard Time, I had to answer the note. I was duty and honor and conscience bound to find out which one of them wanted to die enough to kill himself. I need this time away from them to gird myself, to prepare for the last final effort. To get ready to impose myself, to hold and capture, beg and cajole and argue. To change a mind.

Always assuming that I could find the one mind that must be changed.

The Twentieth-Century Limited club car seemed different, too. It was older, more worn of plush. The conversations were all forward-looking. Plays. Concerts. Books. Good climate sometimes pushes us outdoors and away from good culture, I thought. In one corner of the car, set apart in a small square, there was a telephone.

"I may be naive," I said to a woman next to me, "but that looks like a telephone. What is it doing here?"

"To talk on, of course. They can get you anybody, anywhere."

"No."

"Yes. Once I forgot something and remembered it at Ashtabula . . ." She went on about it.

After a while I left. I stood in the vestibule while we slowed for some unknown town.

As far as I could see the lights were hazy with snow, the tops of the trees white-puffed, the people bundled against it and moving briskly, as if they were in full command of their most-used muscles. It was another world from our orange groves, our smog, the hazy mornings and the blazing afternoons. The feeling of disembodiment hit me again.

What was I going to do? Where was I to look? Where to watch?

Grady Oliver's voice came close to my ear. "Like a Christmas card, that's what you'd say if you weren't such an original writer."

"Grady," I didn't turn. "I could explain about this afternoon. I'm sorry I missed our walk. I'm tired of this train. I'm tired of the people."

"But you love people," he reminded me. "Remember?"

"Oh, stop needing me," I cried irritably. "I thought I'd get three days of mental and emotional rest out of this trip. Look what it's been."

"What has it been?" He wasn't teasing me now.

"It's been rotten. Every minute of it. And it's going to get worse." I turned to go. "Why don't you run along and uplift some other woman's ego? Turn on the charm for Sandra Mitchell. She could use a little help."

"I helped Miss Hubbins this

Continued overleaf

# "FAST TRAIN TO NEW YORK," by Charlotte Edwards

afternoon," he said soberly. "That's my good deed for the day."

"And she helped you."

"Yes," he agreed thoughtfully. "She did. Those trusting eyes."

"See? I moved around him. He put out one arm as a barrier. I stopped."

"Ann," he said, "I'm not stupid. Something is bothering you. Tell me."

I didn't mean to say it. It popped out. "Grady," I asked, "did you ever think of committing suicide?"

Shock slapped his face. He put his hands quickly on my shoulders. He leaned towards me and stared into my eyes. "Ann," he said urgently, "no! You couldn't think of such a thing. Not you. You're so rich. So full of life—"

I wanted to laugh, but it choked in my throat. It wasn't funny, the wonderful concern on his face, the intensity of his declaration that I was too young, too good, too something—to die by my own hand or any other way. The tears felt warm in my eyes.

"Not me," I whispered. "Not me, Grady." I slipped from his grasp.

In my roomette I opened the brief-case. If I could put them down, like people in a story, maybe it would come clear. Where to look first. Whom to persuade.

It was now or never. New York tomorrow morning. If alone didn't do it tonight, he'd bury himself, or she would, in that great crowded vastness. I'd never know which one, nor if I could have stopped it. I didn't want to live with that guilt.

"Sandra and Holmes Mitchell," I put down. "A strange father-daughter combination. Father repulsive physically. Daughter inherited worst features. Tries to make up to her with possessions and service for the damage he subconsciously figures he's done by being her progenitor. Girl filled with hate and tension, knowing she can never be attractive, as her mother was. Result: Daughter alcoholic. Father emotionally fatigued, ready to crack wide open."

I wet the tip of the lead with my tongue.

"Famous actress, Sonya Abbott, warm, happy person, surrounded by her success and people who protect and flatter her. Has beauty, fame, money, all while young enough to enjoy them. However, can't get enough of anything. Doesn't value marriage too highly. Tempted by masculine attention. Result: Affair going on with man from New York. Kind enough not to want to hurt Tag. Not strong enough to end it with other man."

"Tag Bailey." I went on to a fresh line. "It's never easy to be the husband of a woman like Sonya. To have a secondary success. To do without the normal simplicities of children and a private sort of home. Result: Occasional sharp comments reveal hidden frustrations."

"Ellamae Hubbins. All heart and has led with it once too often. Hurt by jilting. Even before that, suspect she was pretty neurotic. Ready to be hurt again. Result: Tries to retreat from the world, make self invisible."

"Grady Oliver. Defeated at moment. Doubt he's had good job for some time. Staked all on trip west. Looks like bust. Hitched wagon temporarily to sympathetic look in woman's (my) eyes. Result: Has cockeyed idea somebody else can solve it all for him. Finds nobody else can—what then?"

I leaned my head against the

back of the seat. Looking at it my way, they all had perfectly sensible motivations for murdering themselves.

Looking at it my way, thinking of people I'd known, almost everybody has a reason for suicide, if he lets that reason loom above all else in his life. Except me, of course. Me, I have no reason.

I could have, though. My heart began to beat thickly.

If something bad should happen to the boy. If I should get a telegram in New York, or phone call. If they told me.

My mouth was dry. I got up, ran water for a drink. My knees were weak. Even thinking about it, even making it up as a far-fetched idea, filled me with sickness. If such a thing should ever come true—how could I live with that sickness? I couldn't!

I found myself frantically grabbing my bag, pushing the solid door aside, slapping furiously at the curtains, and running down the aisle.

When I reached the forward club car it was empty except for the conductor, sitting at a far table.

"I have to call California," I cried to him.

He jumped up. I must have sounded wild.

"Lady," he said, "it's getting late."

"It's early out there. Do it for me. Make the connection." I held up my hands. They were shaking uncontrollably.

"Okay, okay," he soothed. "Look, you just sit down here." He patted me into a chair. I heard the clink of glass. Then he was beside me, handing me a drink. "Sip this. Try to relax. It takes a while. What's the number?"

I scrambled through my purse and pulled out my wallet. "It's in there. With my identification."

He took it and went over to the phone. I don't know how long he worked and talked. I was back home, leaving for the station. The boy was in the doorway, surrounded by light. "I love you," he was calling.

I was talking silently to Bruce. "You don't have a feeling of panic, not like this, without something terrible being wrong. I have to call, Bruce. I have to know."

I was aware of Plagus, then of Grady Oliver. I didn't look at them. I didn't care. Not about anything, anybody, except to pick up that phone and hear a voice from home. To be told it was all right.

It took a long time. Forever.

Once Grady asked urgently, "What is it, Ann? Tell me." Funny—my voice was steady. "Nothing. I'm just calling home."

He didn't believe me.

"What you said out there—" he gestured towards the space between cars—"about—suicide—"

The conductor sounded excited, pleased with himself. "Here's your party, ma'am."

I was at the phone without knowing how I moved there. "Hello," I cried. "Hello!"

Bruce's voice came thinly. "Ann!" He sounded strange. "What is it? Why are you calling? You're not even supposed to be in New York yet."

"I'm not in New York."

"Was there an accident? What's wrong?"

I shook my head. "No, Bruce, is the boy all right? Is Jake all right?"

There was a long, terrible pause.

"Of course he's all right," Bruce stated flatly. "He's been one hour in bed, ate all his dinner, got 100 in arithmetic—and you're wasting a lot of money."

The tears ran down my cheeks. "I know. I know. But, Bruce, I'm so homesick for him. I can't stand—"

"Where are you calling from?"

"The train."

"So you're homesick for the boy?"

"Yes. Oh, yes!"

"He's all right. Word of honor."

For the first time I was aware of the silence in the car. I smiled at the three of them and nodded happily.

Bruce's voice came again. "You'd better hang up. It must be late there. And money is money."

"Bruce—" I didn't want to let go. I wanted to laugh, dance, to sing.

Bruce cleared his throat. Strange, all the way from California I could hear him clear his throat. "Better say goodbye."

"Goodbye, Bruce," I cried brightly. "Kiss him for me. I wrote you a letter."

Then there was the pause for a considered answer that had always disturbed me. For no reason the lightness began to seep quickly out of me.

in my hands. I held it in my bloodless fingers.

"Please let me help you," Grady insisted.

Ann Dean, humanitarian, I thought. "I love all people." I looked at Grady Oliver and I hated him. It was wrong and stupid. But, then, I was wrong and stupid. I'd given my worry, my watching, my reasoning to this stranger and the others like him. While Bruce—

"What love I've had I've lost"

My mind refused to go on—mercifully.

"The conductor will see to everything." I stood up. "Good night."

All right, so he looked slapped. Let him.

I walked forever to my roomette. I pulled down the bed and lay on it, fully clothed. Bruce, I thought. Bruce.

The train went on and on. The minutes stretched thin, one by one. Stretched, snapped. The wheels cried in utter desperation. "Let him wait, let him wait, give me time, give me time, let him wait, let him wait, give me time."

No night should be like that. When it was over I packed my small bag and walked to the

and go away. The words would thin out on the typewriter. The people would come and vanish. But Bruce—he was the touchstone. The centre. The boy must come second. Just as he had come second into the love that had once been Bruce's and mine. The result of that love. The proof. Bruce had tried to tell me. Even the boy had. "Let's not overdo this, Mom."

It was a long ride to our town from the airport. I had time to tear "To Whom It May Concern" into tiny bits and let it float out across the freeway.

While I paid the driver and turned toward the lights of my home, praying for the strength to get there, I added one last promise to the total.

I would never write again. I would never exist in a make-believe world again.

The door opened easily to my touch. The whole room stood out in bas-relief. The woman was knitting in the big chair by the floor lamp. The boy was lying on his stomach watching Tag Bailey bring law and order to the Old West.

There was no sign of Bruce and they did not hear me.

"Bruce!" I yelled, suddenly all of it—the clogging, the thinking, the panic—climbing into an animal noise in my throat.

I ran through the house, ignoring the woman's "Mrs. Dean!" Not hearing the boy's glad cry of "Mom!" I ran through the dining-room, the bedrooms, and into the kitchen.

The lights were very bright there, all of them on. Bruce stood frozen, a glass in his hand, his eyes blank with shock.

I raced to him and dashed the glass into the sink. No matter, maybe that wasn't it. But it could be. It could be.

I threw myself against him and pulled his cheek down against my own.

"I love you!" I cried. I was frantic with saying it. Over and over.

Well, that was six months ago. Bruce's surprise has faded. But not his happiness. Nor mine. We have found something that makes us sorry for all of the rest of the world. We will never lose it. Never.

We have also never mentioned "To Whom It May Concern." I was just homesick, I tell everybody, trying to look sheepish, when they ask why I returned so precipitously.

The typewriter and the briefcase have been out in the garage for these past six months. I haven't touched them.

Until this morning. Two things happened this morning.

This morning—Sunday—Bruce got up early to play golf. He brought me a cup of coffee and kissed me.

"It's chilly." I sipped a cup of coffee, watching him dress. "You'd better wear a jacket."

He rummaged in the bottom drawer, the one I never seem to get to, and pulled out a jersey.

He smiled at me. I smiled back. It's part of our new language and we like speaking it.

He pulled the jersey over his head and yanked it down around his waist. Then his hand went up to the small breast pocket and pulled out a little square of paper.

He frowned. "What the devil?" He unfolded it.

I can't remember seeing Bruce blush before. But he blushed then, standing in the foggy light of the bedroom window with that piece of paper in his hand.

"What is it?"

He swallowed. He came over and tossed the paper on my bed. "Thought I did," he said. "But I forgot it. Whaddya know?"

He turned around and went quickly from the room. I

listened to the clatter of his clubs, the hushed slam of the back door, the grinding of the accelerator of his old car.

When everything was still, I picked up the paper. My fingers shook as I looked at it.

"My Dearest (Bruce's scrawling writing said), I don't seem to be able to say things any more. Too much work, confusion. But I want you to know that the greatest bravery I've ever shown, including the war, is letting you go off alone away from me."

"I love you so very much. Even after all this time I can't look at you without wanting to touch you. I'd have no life at all if you weren't in it. I'll have no life at all until you come back to me."

"Make a good impression in New York, but not too good. I'm roaring jealous this very minute, and will be every day until you walk in the front door again."

"Sounds silly, darling, but I'm still and always will be—Your Lover."

I lay there for a long time with the note in my hand, tears in my eyes and pure love in my heart.

Then the boy came in and set the heavy Sunday-morning paper on the bedspread. "You got a headache?" he asked, peering at me.

I smiled. "I've got no aches, Son. You run along and let Mother read her paper."

"Okay. I'll fix my own breakfast."

He's grown very self-reliant these past six months.

I smoothed the note and smoothed it. Finally I tucked it under my pillow. For a while I stared at the ceiling, complete well-being, like sunshine, all through me. At last I picked up the paper. I discarded the funnies, tossing them over on to Bruce's bed.

Then the thought came. Right then, while my arm was in mid-air.

If Bruce didn't write To Whom It May Concern—who did?

My arm came back to rest on the paper. My eyes went down. I picked out the headlines, one by one, absent-mindedly.

Then a set of headlines picked me out. Grew blacker as I looked, and bigger.

SUCCEEDS IN SLEEPING-PILL SUICIDE.

The dateline was New York.

"Sonya Abbott, famous motion-picture star, found dead in East Side apartment of well-known play producer Bartley Asherton during Asherton's absence on a flying trip to the West Coast."

That nice kid, I thought, as I had once before. I am a simple soul . . .

You can't eat your cake and have it.

I should have told her, I thought. I was suddenly cold, suddenly pulling a blanket up around my shoulders. I should have told her. But no, I'd closed myself off.

And now nobody could tell her. Not anybody. Not anything.

So I got the brief-case out of the garage, with all the little "dibs and dabs." I pulled the typewriter in and I've been sitting before it until every muscle aches and every thought. Now it is very late at night and I am through.

Bruce put the boy to bed and went himself, hours ago. Before he did, he kissed me on the top of my head.

"Glad to see you're back in business again," he applauded. "What you going to call this one?"

"Fast Train to New York," I said, and slapped another piece of paper into the machine.

(Copyright)

## Annigoni's magnificent painting illustrates next week's novel.

● A magnificent full-page painting of Elizabeth the First by the famous Italian artist Pietro Annigoni will appear in next week's issue with our novel condensation "THE ROBSART AFFAIR," by Jennette and Francis Letton.

Annigoni was specially commissioned to paint this picture to illustrate the novel, which is a dramatic story of the young Elizabeth.

Annigoni is the artist who achieved world-wide acclaim with his portrait of the present Queen, Elizabeth the Second. Recently he has been asked to paint Princess Margaret.

In his richly imaginative picture of Elizabeth the First he has captured both the brooding sadness of her ill-starred destiny as a woman and the fire that made her England's great Queen.

The theme of "The Robsart Affair" is the tragic love affair between Elizabeth and the handsome Robert Dudley. Their turbulent romance is splashed in brilliant color against the background of Elizabethan England with its intrigues and ambitions.

"Ann," he said abruptly, "Ann—did you get my note?"

"Note?" I repeated stupidly.

"I—" He hesitated. "I tucked a little note in your brief-case—"

He tucked a little note in my brief-case. My mind clocked carefully, making nothing of it. "Never mind," he said quickly. "Goodbye. Goodbye, Ann." He hung up.

I listened to the buzzing of the broken connection. I turned around, numb.

"Try that number again," I demanded of the conductor.

He frowned. I moved aside for him.

I suspended my mind in the floating silence. The click of the receiver brought it back.

"The circuits are busy."

"I want to get off at the next stop," I said. "I have to fly back home."

"That's New York, ma'am."

"But we don't get to New York till morning."

He nodded.

"Can't you stop the train—maybe at Buffalo?"

He smiled thinly. "This train stops only by special arrangement between Chicago and New York. Has to go through Operations. You gotta be a real big wheel, ma'am."

Grady put his hand on my shoulder. "Why don't you rest now, Ann? I'll take care of everything. Wire ahead for plane reservations . . ."

All night, I thought dazedly. I have to wait all night going away from Bruce before I can start back to him.

Plagus put a cup of coffee

vestibule. I felt vaguely the stir of them all behind me, yeasting a sort of excitement because they were to walk free again, walk in the biggest city in the world about their various acts of living.

Living. Let him wait!

The second the steps were down so was I. I raced up the ramp, only my purse, brief-case, and small bag in my hands.

Plagus called, "Mrs. Dean! Your bag!"

"Ship them!" I yelled. "Burn them!"

A cab got me to the airport. I didn't have long to wait. There was the roar and the lift and the sun was behind us. New York was behind us. The silver train was behind us.

Let him wait!

So that's the end of the story, really. At least the part that comes from observing and adding people up the way you want to.

Not necessarily to make the total in truth. As I found out this morning.

I don't remember the plane ride back. I don't remember it because for six months I have diligently and carefully buried it under every other thought and emotion. You can't live through such panic, such self-analysis, such guilt, otherwise.

By the time I got off the plane, though, I had added some promises to my prayer.

If he had waited; if Bruce hadn't—done it. I would be his all the rest of my life. His in the way I started out to be and somehow got sidetracked from. The boy would grow up

# Happy New Year

By **LEILA C. HOWARD**, our Food and Cookery Expert

● New Year hostesses can follow the example of famous dancer and choreographer **Katherine Dunham**, and serve a delicious dish called **Gumbo File** which will ensure the success of any party.

**I**N addition to being an expert and enthusiastic cook, Katherine Dunham is also a painter and anthropologist. She collects new dances, folklore, and recipes in every country she visits while touring the world with her company of dancers.

Gumbo File (pronounced feelay), a delicately flavored stew made from a combination of unusual ingredients, is one of her favorite recipes.

"The recipe originated in New Orleans and has a strong African flavor about it," said Miss Dunham. "It combines many ingredients in the African style, including the unusual combination of fish and meat."

"One of the main ingredients is okra, which is a seed pod of a plant something like the hibiscus. The African word for okra is 'gumbo,' which is how the recipe gets its name. It's the okra in the Gumbo that gives it its distinctive flavor."

"Served with fluffy rice, it makes a wonderful New Year party dish."

Gumbo file, an American flavoring, is not obtainable in Australia. However, crumbled bay leaves and fresh, chopped thyme make a good substitute.

The tinned okra mentioned in the

recipe below is sold by importers of Continental foodstuffs.

## GUMBO FILE

One chicken (approximately 4lb.), 1 medium-sized crab, 1 large lobster, 3 tomatoes, 1 large onion, 1 large leek, 4lb. salt pork, 4oz. ham (sliced thickly), 1 chilli, 1 tablespoon chopped parsley, 4oz. butter, 2 dozen prawns, 1 bay leaf, 1 dozen oysters, salt and pepper to taste, dash cayenne pepper, 2 level tablespoons gumbo file (powdered bay leaves and thyme make a good substitute), 2 cups canned okra.

Boil chicken in 2 quarts water until just tender. Meanwhile saute chopped skinned tomatoes, chopped onion and leek (including some of the green part), chopped ham and salt pork, chopped body section of crab and lobster, and chopped chilli in the melted butter until all ingredients are soft and tender. Add parsley, salt, pepper, and cayenne pepper. Then add liquid in which chicken cooked, and bay leaf. Bring to the boil, simmer gently 30 to 40 minutes. Crack crab and lobster claws, leave meat intact. Add claws to mixture in saucepan, then stir in prawns, oysters, chunky pieces from breast of chicken, gumbo file, and okra; simmer 10 minutes. Serve immediately with fluffy cooked rice.



**THE FINISHED DISH** shown by Miss Dunham looks as good as it tastes, with its combination of lobster, ham, chicken, prawns, oysters, crab, pork, and mixed vegetables. Heaped on a platter with rice piled in the centre, it is an attractive dish to serve at your New Year party.



**LEFT:** Miss Dunham shows all the ingredients needed for the Gumbo File, a dish with a subtle flavor.



**SAUTEING** some of the chopped ingredients, Miss Dunham tosses the mixture to brown it evenly.



**ABOVE:** The sauteed mixture is placed in a heavy-based saucepan with the chicken and chicken stock.

# Prize steak recipe

● Spiced steak, an interesting main dinner dish with an unusual flavor of nutmeg, Worcestershire and tomato sauces, wins the main prize of £5 in our recipe contest.

**CONSOLATION** prizes of £1 each are awarded to recipes for a quick and simple mayonnaise and a novel biscuit. The mayonnaise is good to have on hand during the salad season.

All spoon measurements in our recipes are level.

## SPICED STEAK

One and a half pounds top-side steak, 2 tablespoons rice, 1 onion, 1 tomato, 1 potato, 2 tablespoons grated cheese, salt and pepper, ½ teaspoon nutmeg, 1 cup stock or water, 1 dessertspoon Worcestershire sauce, 1 tablespoon tomato sauce, parsley.

Beat steak with rolling-pin or steak mallet until very thin. Trim excess fat, cut into service-sized pieces. Peel and slice onion, tomato, and potato, fill into an ovenware dish in alternate layers with meat, sprinkling each layer with a little grated cheese and washed rice. Season with salt and

pepper, add nutmeg, pour stock or water mixed with sauces over contents of dish. Cover and cook in a moderate oven two hours or until meat is tender. Serve hot garnished with parsley.

First Prize of £5 to Miss B. Connolly, 14 Claremont Road, Enfield, N.S.W.

## HUNGARIAN NUT STICKS

Four ounces butter or substitute, ½ cup sugar, 1 small egg, ½ cup self-raising flour, ½ cup plain flour, ½ cup cornflour, pinch salt, few drops vanilla essence.

Topping: One cup chopped mixed nuts, ½ cup sugar, ½ teaspoon cinnamon, 2 egg-whites.

Cream butter or substitute with sugar and vanilla, add egg, beat well. Work in sifted flours, cornflour, and salt. Spread mixture evenly over base of greased large flat tin; it should be a thin layer. Bake in moderate oven 15 minutes. Meanwhile, place all topping



SPICED STEAK, an appetising and substantial dish, tastes good with a generous sprinkling of grated cheese added just before serving. See recipe this page.

ingredients into a saucepan. Stir over low heat until sugar is dissolved and ingredients well mixed. Continue stirring over heat until mixture thickens and leaves the sides of the saucepan. Spread evenly over partially cooked biscuit layer, bake a further 15 minutes. Cool slightly, then cut into finger lengths. Store in airtight container.

Consolation Prize of £1 to Mrs. G. Willoughby, 9 Coulter Ave., Black Forest, S.A.

## MAYONNAISE

One-third cup vinegar, 1 tablespoon melted butter, ½ cup sweetened condensed milk, 1 egg, 1½ teaspoons dry mustard, ½ teaspoon salt.

Place all ingredients in a screw-top jar, fasten top tightly, shake well for two minutes. The mixture blends perfectly. Keeps very well in the refrigerator.

Consolation Prize of £1 to Mrs. D. M. Roddy, Box 27, Wellington, N.S.W.

## FAMILY DISH

A SHOULDER of mutton, cleverly disguised, can be as tempting and appetising as lamb. This week's family dish, spiced mutton shoulder, costs approximately 9/6 and serves six.

### SPICED MUTTON SHOULDER

One shoulder of mutton, 1 clove garlic, 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce, 1 tablespoon lemon juice or vinegar, 2 teaspoons chopped mint, 2 tablespoons olive oil, ½ teaspoon paprika, ½ teaspoon salt, 1 dessertspoon sugar, ½ teaspoon nutmeg, flour.

Wipe meat with damp cloth. Make several incisions over surface of meat and insert pieces of chopped garlic. Combine all other ingredients and thicken to a paste with flour. Rub this mixture into meat, sprinkle lightly with extra flour. Bake in small quantity of hot fat in moderate oven two hours or until tender. Baste meat frequently while cooking. Remove meat from pan, drain off excess fat. Make gravy in pan and flavor with Worcestershire sauce, chopped green pepper, and chopped onion.

## LACK OF APPETITE

By SISTER MARY JACOB, Our Mothercraft Nurse.

PARENTS often worry unnecessarily when young children lose their appetites and will not eat. Lack of appetite may be sudden or gradual. If a child who usually has a hearty appetite refuses his food it often means the onset of some illness and he should be watched carefully.

Physical conditions such as constipation, indigestion, diseased tonsils, and bad teeth are often found to be the cause. Physical or mental fatigue, often unsuspected, is a frequent cause of loss of appetite.

There are many causes of fatigue in young children —

not enough sleep, prolonged exercise, too much study or excitement, or the over-stimulation that results from young children being continually with adults.

An emotional factor such as jealousy of another youngster may make a child seek attention by refusing to eat. Lastly, parental attitudes are often entirely responsible for a child's lack of appetite. Parents may be too solicitous and too insistent that the child should eat. To show concern over lack of appetite is a grave mistake.

Parents should remember there is as much variation in children's appetites as in the appetites of adults.

## Someone didn't INSIST ON "SELLOTAPE"



What a catastrophe! Ink bottles smashed, footpath stained, nylons ruined—all because the man who wrapped the parcel didn't insist on 'Sellotape'. Make sure you do!

"Sellotape" IS THE CONSISTENT BRAND OF STICKY TAPE

'Sellotape' always comes to you "factory-fresh", because each roll is overwrapped in protective "Cellophane". 'Sellotape' never dries out, never goes gooey, never splits. Insist on 'Sellotape'. It sticks and stays stuck!

For the home: 'Sellotape' costs only 9d. for the 3 yard roll, 1/9 for 8½ yards. A thousand uses round the house — and the youngsters need it for school, too!

For the factory, shop or office: 'Sellotape' comes in factory-sealed tins of 72 or 36 yard rolls to fit standard size dispensers.

\* "Cellophane" is the registered trade mark of British Cellophane Ltd.



DELICIOUS DAVIS RECIPES!



Try this flavoursome XMAS PUDDING!

## COLD XMAS PUDDING

Ingredients: 1 envelope or 3 teaspoons Davis Gelatine, 3 tablespoons hot water, 4 oz. sultanas, 4 oz. cherries, 8 oz. mixed fruits, such as seeded raisins, currants, prunes or figs, as seeded crystallised ginger, 1 oz. shredded peel, bananas, ½ pint sherry, 4 tablespoons sugar, 2 tablespoons lemon juice, piece of lemon rind.

Method: Cook dried fruit except cherries in a little hot water for 10 minutes to plump them; strain. Shred almonds, slice bananas, slice cherries, cut ginger and prunes or figs in small pieces. Mix all together, place in a basin. Pour over 3 table-spoons sherry, cover firmly. Cook slowly to boiling point ½ cup water, sugar, lemon rind and juice; add gelatine dissolved in hot water; add cold water to make up to ½ pint; add balance of sherry, pour over the fruit. Unmould. Serve with ice cream, cream or custard.



FREE RECIPE BOOK!

DAVIS GELATINE

Write for your free copy of "Desserts, Salads and Savoury Dishes," the new Davis Recipe Book, your most helpful guide to exciting gelatine cookery. Send name, address and 4d. stamp for postage to

DEPARTMENT W, DAVIS GELATINE

• G.P.O. Box 3583, SYDNEY • G.P.O. Box 4058, MELBOURNE  
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• G.P.O. Box 588, PERTH

THE DAVIS GELATINE ORGANISATION • FAMOUS THE WORLD OVER  
Page 60

**PATTERN FOR BEGINNERS**  
**F4381.**—Beginners' pattern for an easy-to-make small girl's waisted dress. Sizes: Lengths 20, 23, 28, and 34in. for 4, 6, 8, and 10 years. Requires 1½ to 1 7-8th yd. 36in. material, and ¼yd. 36in. contrast material. Price 2/6.

# Fashion PATTERNS

**F4387.**—Summer dress-jacket ensemble. Sizes 32 to 38in. bust. Requires 5½yds. 36in. material. Price 4/6.

**F4385.**—Slender-line sheath-dress. Sizes 32 to 38in. bust. Requires 3½yds. 36in. material. Price 3/9.

**F4383.**—Chic wrap-and-tie blouse. Sizes 32 to 38in. bust. Requires 2½yds. 36in. material. Price 3/.



F4384

**F4384.**—Smartly flared skirt with bobble-fringe trim. Sizes 24½, 26, 28, and 30in. waist. Requires 4yds. 36in. material and 5yds. bobble-fringe braid. Price 3/.

## NEEDLEWORK NOTIONS

### No. 384—SMALL GIRL'S SUN HAT

The hat is obtainable cut out ready to make in check cotton gingham. The color choice includes pink and white; red and white; blue and white; and green and white. Sizes: 2 years 8/9, 3 to 4 years 9/8, 5 to 6 years 11/3, 7 to 8 years 13/9. Postage and registration 1/6 extra.

### No. 385—SMALL GIRL'S DRESS AND MATCHING BLOOMERS

Dress and bloomer set obtainable cut out ready to make in a nursery print, summer-breeze cotton, the dress is finished with a white rick-rack braid trim. Color choice includes a blue or pink background, both printed in lemon and green. Sizes: 1 year 16/6, 2 years 18/3, 3 years 21/9, 4 years 24/6. Postage and registration 2/9 extra.

### No. 386—POT-HOLDER SET

The holders are obtainable cut out ready to make and clearly traced to embroider. The material is floral cotton featuring predominant shades of lemon, blue, pink, and green. Price: Set of three 6/6. Postage and registration 1/- extra.

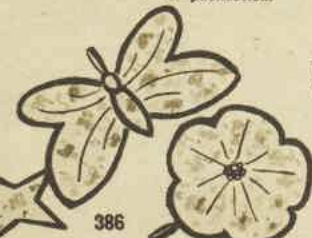
### No. 387—SMALL GIRL'S DRESS

The dress, designed for easy laundering, is obtainable cut out ready to make in a pin-spot, summer-breeze cotton. Color choice includes red, green, pink, blue, and lemon, all printed with a white spot. Sizes: Lengths 18in. for 2 years, 17/3; 20in. for 3 to 4 years, 18/6; 23in. for 5 to 6 years, 19/3; 28in. for 7 to 8 years, 19/11. Postage and registration 2/9 extra.

### No. 388—TENNIS DRESS

Smartly styled one-piece tennis dress is obtainable cut out ready to make in white pique and white sacorised poplin. Sizes: 32 to 34in. bust, 35/11; 36 and 38in. bust, 37/3. Postage and registration 4/- extra.

• Needlework Notions are available for only six weeks after date of publication.



**F4386.**—Pretty afternoon dress designed with a cool, low-cut neckline, moulded bodice, and wide skirt. Sizes 32 to 38in. bust. Requires 4½ yds. 36in. material. Price 3/6.

**F4382.**—One-piece summer dress styled with a cool, collarless neckline and a softly flared skirt. The dress can be made with long or short sleeves. Sizes 32 to 38in. bust. Requires: Long-sleeved design, 5½yds. 36in. material; short-sleeved design, 4½yds. 36in. material. Price 3/9.

# No more tears

from 'soap in the eyes'



## WON'T BURN or IRRITATE eyes!

- Pure, gentle, safe even in hard water
- Rinses easily
- Lathers quickly

New formula that **SHEENS** as it **CLEANS**



3356

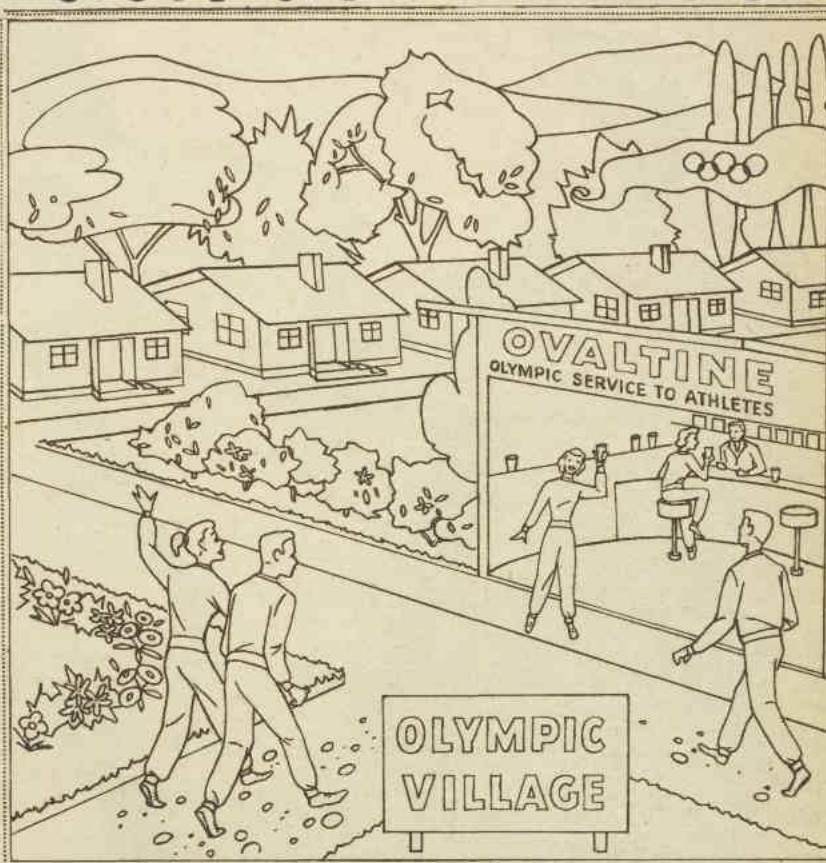
PRODUCT OF JOHNSON & JOHNSON







## enter now **OVALTINE** COLOURING COMPETITION



and win a brand-new  
**MALVERN STAR BIKE!**  
or a **BROWNIE CAMERA**

1st Prize (Boys) Malvern Star Bicycle • 1st Prize (Girls) Malvern Star Bicycle  
25 Prizes of Brownie Cameras • 200 Prizes of Jig-saw Puzzles

**OPEN TO BOYS AND GIRLS UP TO 14 YEARS OLD!**

**RULES:** Colour your entry in yourself, using coloured pencils, crayons or water colours. Post your entry, WITH AN OVALTINE LABEL FROM A 1 lb. TIN, to "Ovaltine Competition," Box 5915, G.P.O., SYDNEY. Be sure to print your name, address and age on a separate piece of paper, and pin it to your entry. This competition is open to all boys and girls

who are not more than 14 years of age. Judging will be based on neatness and merit, taking your age into consideration. The Judge's decision will be final, and no correspondence will be entered into on this subject. Prizewinners will be announced in the "Women's Weekly" during February, 1957. Competition closes 11th January, 1957.

\* In States where this provision is against the law, it is not necessary to include an Ovaltine label with your entry.

## HEY! BOYS AND GIRLS CHOCOLATE OVALTINE MILK-SHAKES ARE GREAT

Gee, they taste good, and with all those vitamins they make you feel good and strong.

Olympic champions train on Ovaltine; it makes them healthy and gives them strength to win races. Get mum to buy you Chocolate Ovaltine, and have a delicious milkshake every day; remember, you might be an Olympic champion yourself one day.

### A MESSAGE TO MOTHERS...

Children burn up energy at a terrific rate, that needs replacing even between meals. An Ovaltine milkshake is the complete answer to this important problem. They'll simply adore the rich flavour of Chocolate Ovaltine, and as a tonic-food supplement you can give them nothing so beneficial.

Ovaltine is a concentrated extract of malt, milk and eggs plus additional vitamins. Its high caloric value sustains physical energy and mental effort and promotes abounding good health.

Whilst Chocolate Ovaltine is the favourite with children, many adults prefer Malt Ovaltine because of its distinctive flavour. Why not try a can of each? It's most economical—only 3/3 a 1/2 lb. can. They're both delicious, cold or hot.

### "SO SIMPLE YOU CAN MAKE IT YOURSELF"

Put two or more teaspoonsful of Ovaltine in a glass and dissolve with a little hot water; add cold milk and stir. It only takes a few seconds.



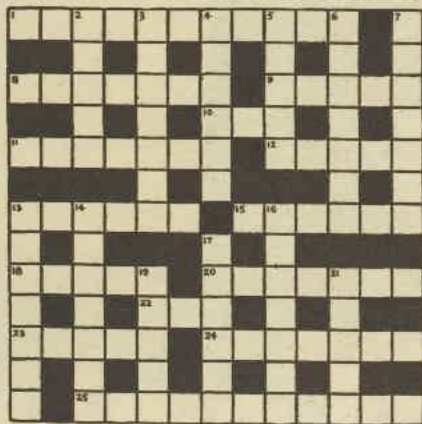
# OVALTINE

THE CHOICE OF OLYMPIC CHAMPIONS

## THIS WEEK'S CROSSWORD

### ACROSS

- Insolent, but it becomes relevant if I'm not in it (11).
- Notches which have room for a study in the centre (7).
- Inclination with a fitting end (5).
- Passion to be found in the head of a land in Europe (3).
- Prosperities utter an exclamation of joy for a start (7).
- This gives lift to a plane from both ends (5).
- Is lazy in pants (6).
- Main channel headed by skill (6).
- Can be done to roofs or floors and to a head, if the hat is made of silk (5).
- Put in confusion (7).
- Before from the front and from the back (3).
- Beam of light on artificial silk (5).
- A bill needs three to become a law (7).
- Prove beyond doubt first with an evil spirit (11).



Solution will be published next week.

### DOWN

- This Irishman is nothing but temper (5).
- Hurried away with a bag to plunder (7).
- To persist in pressing (6).
- Chemical compound made of trees (5).
- Supporting frame of letters (7).
- A leader of the First Crusade was thus named (7).
- Is a rest sufficient to compose ironic poems? Yes, (7).
- Repressed because everybody said yes (7).
- Cut capers above an insect to make it appear standing on its hind legs (7).
- Shakespearean character, hero of a Weber's opera (6).
- Coarse cotton fabric you may get by excavating it when turned (5).
- I am in a story of heroic adventure to form an antelope (5).



Solution of last week's crossword.

*Often  
battered  
never  
bettered*



*Only*  
**Arnott's**  
*make*  
**Sao (REGD.) Biscuits**

Order your tin early from your grocer for the Xmas and New Year Holidays.  
*There is no Substitute for Quality.*

# MASTERCRAFT

*Lift-out, Hang-up*

## CALENDAR

*for* 1957



ASK FOR *Mastercraft* BY NAME...IT'S WORTH IT





JANUARY

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
..	..	1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31	..	..
..	..	..	..	..	..	..

FEBRUARY

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
..	..	..	..	..	1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	..	..
..	..	..	..	..	..	..

1957

MARCH

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
..	..	..	..	..	1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	..	..	..	..	..	..



APRIL

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
..	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	..	..	..	..
..	..	..	..	..	..	..



One foot up, the other foot down,  
That is the way to London Town.  
For feeling gay throughout the day,  
Scorched Peanut Bar's the tasty way.





MAY

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
..	..	..	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	..
..	..	..	..	..	..	..

JUNE

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
..	..	..	..	..	..	1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	..	..	..	..	..	..

JULY

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
..	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31	..	..	..
..	..	..	..	..	..	..



AUGUST

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
..	..	..	..	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
..	..	..	..	..	..	..



"Pussy Cat, Pussy Cat, where have you been?"  
 "I've been up to London to visit the Queen!"  
 "And Pussy Cat, what is your favourite sweet?"  
 "Why—it's Scorched Peanut Bar—the tastiest treat!"





### SEPTEMBER

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	..	..	..	..	..
..	..	..	..	..	..	..

### OCTOBER

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
..	..	1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31	..	..
..	..	..	..	..	..	..

### NOVEMBER

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
..	..	..	..	..	1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
..	..	..	..	..	..	..



### DECEMBER

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31	..	..	..	..
..	..	..	..	..	..	..

Jack Spratt could eat no fat,  
His wife could eat no lean.  
But now Scorched Peanut Bar means that.  
They live like King and Queen!

